

When All Else Fails – Prolog

A Chinese businessman had flown from Seoul South Korean to Los Angeles to place an order for industrial equipment. He was looking forward to meeting with the company officials and placing the order for the equipment that would allow them to double production once the machinery was installed and operating at capacity. The ride on the airline was caused him minor discomfort because he couldn't get his ears to clear at altitude.

His sinuses had been giving him fits since he'd visiting his friend's chicken operation. His friend had complained about a sudden die off of one flock, as sometimes happens. Mr. Li gave it little thought was the plane landed at LAX and his ears finally popped. He got cab to the Marriott and moved toward check-in with his single bag and briefcase. He felt a sneeze coming on and was able to cover his mouth with a tissue barely in time.

"I have reservations. Li."

"Yes Mr. Li, room 812. You'll be paying with..."

"American Express."

"If I may swipe your card, you'll be set."

Mr. Li felt another sneeze coming on and hurried to get out another tissue. He made it just time.

"Excuse me, sinuses."

"No problem Mr. Li. You're still anticipating a week stay?"

"It could be longer, business negotiations never go as one expects."

"I'll make a note. We would appreciate any advance notice you could give us. Do you need a bellhop?"

"Thank you, no. One suitcase and my briefcase."

Mr. Li called and confirmed his appointment for the next day. Next, he went to the hotel restaurant and had pleasant meal. He noticed that his sniffles were getting worse. After he ate, he returned to his room and took a hot shower. The steam seemed to loosen the congestion, briefly. Dressing in pajamas, he called it a day.

Three hours later, he awoke from a nightmare. His head hurt and the sniffles were back full force. He felt his forehead and decided he had a fever. He called the front desk and indicated he wasn't well and required medical attention. The Marriott called the LA City

Fire Department and requested a Paramedic unit for an ill guest who had a fever and the sniffles.

Arriving at the hotel, they checked with front desk and were accompanied to room 812 by a hotel employee with a master key. It was flu season and earlier today, WHO made an announcement about a new avian flu strain in China. They donned N-95 masks and nitrile gloves before entering, just in case.

The man, identified as Mr. Li from Beijing, was running a fever of 39.5°C and his lungs were far from clear. His pulse was weak and thready. They called it into the ER and were instructed to establish an IV with normal saline, administer 6 liters of O₂ and transport. One of the Paramedics noticed an airline boarding pass envelope and grabbed it. They instructed the hotel staff to seal the room for the moment.

“What do you have?”

“Temperature 39.5°C, pulse weak and thready, lung congestion. Possibly influenza. Throat is pretty raw.”

“Anything else?”

“One thing, he came to LAX via Seoul from Beijing. I grabbed his boarding pass.”

“We’re going to isolate for the moment. Did either of you get any exposure?”

“Gloves and masks before we entered.”

“Both of you draw a card of Tamiflu from the pharmacy; use it BID. They’ll also have an Rx for Probenecid for each of you; take that 500mg QID. If you develop symptoms, increase the Tamiflu to QID and we’ll prescribe a second card.”

“New treatment regimen?”

“We’ll start it as a prophylactic. The Probenecid has been shown to increase the effectiveness and some testing has suggested doubling the dose of Tamiflu helps. H5N1 has shown some resistance to Tamiflu.”

“It that what this is?”

“Don’t know yet. We’ll get a specimen to the CDC. You heard about the WHO announcement?”

“Sure did.”

“Take Care.”

When All Else Fails – Chapter 1

“How is Mr. Li doing?” I asked on our next run to the ER.

“Mr. Li expired. We have the CDC involved. We have a real problem here. He was infectious when he boarded the plane in Seoul. That flight had 204 aboard including the crew. Of course, he came in through LAX and there’s no telling how many were infected. It’s airborne. Increase your Tamiflu when you pick up the second cards from the Pharmacy. I think you should both isolate for the time being. You’re both single and it shouldn’t be a problem. I’ve already notified LAFD.”

“Is this going to get bad?”

“It sure has the potential. Just this would be bad enough without everything going on in Washington. The Dow dropped about 700 last week and 514 yesterday in reaction the S&P downgrading the credit rating to AA+. Gold went up in the Asian Spot Market to over \$1,700 and is still rising.”

“I glad I got mine when a person could afford it.”

“When did you buy it?”

“I did that when I separated from the Navy in early 2001. I had a bunch set aside to buy a new car and decided to buy a used car and put the rest in gold. At \$1,700, my holdings have grown to more than 6 times my investment. I have some gold Eagles in all 4 denominations, a total of 24 ounces. I also have 100 ounces of silver Eagles and a \$1,000 face value bag of junk silver.”

“How much did you invest?”

“About \$7,000 in gold and about 815 ounces of silver at \$4.50 or \$3,800. I only had \$12,000 left after I bought the used car.”

“You have almost \$75,000 in gold and silver?”

“I do if the prices are \$1,700 and \$40 respectively.”

In fact the gold was worth over six times more than the investment the silver was worth nearly nine times my investment.

Jon DeSoto, age 36 as of 4Jul11. I’m single and was a Navy Corpsman. Took what I knew and made it the basis for my civilian career, Paramedic. I’m originally from Tucson, Arizona where my folks still reside on a small 1,280 acre ranch. They raise cattle and horses and keep a flock of chickens. A nearby neighbor raises dairy cattle, hogs and chickens.

I worked with the USMC as a corpsman. I didn't see a lot of action between 1993 and 2001. One of the guys I palled around with was George Burns, a Designated Marksman, also from Tucson. George used the M-14 DMR and when I got out I bought a Springfield Armory M-21 before the car or precious metals. I added a Night Force 8-32x56mm scope using A.R.M.S. mounts and throw lever rings, Harris bipod and had the walnut stock replaced by a McMillan Bros. tactical M2A fiberglass stock and a cheek piece. My handguns of choice were a Glock 21 and Glock 30. Finally, I bought a Mossberg 590A1 pump SPX.

Mom and Dad had bought my other firearm. Unfortunately, it was still at home on the ranch because the state of California had its head where the sun didn't shine and outlawed the .50 caliber rifle. It was a sweet shooter, a McMillan Tac-50 with a Night Force 12-42x56mm Mil Dot scope and McCann Night Vision Rail. A year later, again on Christmas, I received a titanium suppressor made by Mike's Gun Sales and Service in Arkansas Pass, Texas and 8 additional magazines for a total of 10. Dad had a local gunsmith install the suppressor and make sure it worked as advertised. He then had the suppressor taken off and the muzzle brake reinstalled.

George was home for Christmas that year and I think he was a bit envious. My M-21 was about the closest off the shelf civilian rifle that was similar to his M-14 DMR. He had his own Glocks and agreed with my choices. He kidded me about having a shotgun with a bayonet. At least, he said, it was the OKC3S Marine Corps Bayonet. He positively drooled when he saw the Tac-50. We went shooting before I had to return to LA and he back to Pendleton.

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The CDC confirmed the flu was another round of H5N1. They went on to say that it had mutated and the previous vaccine was no longer totally effective. While the CDC worked to develop a specific vaccine, health workers, military and other 'critical' occupations would be vaccinated with the purified type A vaccine. After I got my shot, I returned to work.

Meanwhile, the market was up and down, like a roller coaster. Gold was pushing \$1,800 as investors sought a safe haven. I reminded me of the markets after 9/11/01. I had gotten into gold at just the right time because since 9/11/01 precious metals had an overall rise, exceeding inflation.

On top of possibility of an epidemic or pandemic, California was in the worst financial mess in its history. Well, maybe not, but it was the worst I was aware of. Neither the state nor the cities had the funds to do what needed to be done. It's very difficult to be a Paramedic when they can't afford to purchase minimal supplies. I had been thinking of returning to Tucson and checked into becoming a Paramedic there. It turned out that they had vacancies.

However, Arizona didn't have reciprocity with any other states and I would have to complete a refresher course to be certified in Arizona. Since I already had the National Certification, I could be hired and complete the refresher during the first 6 months. After much thought and consulting with my parents, I opted to move back to Tucson. My first step was to take a short vacation and get my ducks in a row with the city of Tucson.

Once I completed that, I gave the LAFD two weeks' notice. After my last shift, I rented a U-Haul truck and my partner and George helped me load my possessions and I headed for home. Since I agreed to move back in with my parents, most of my things went into a storage room. My firearms, ammo, food supplies and medical supplies went out to the ranch. I returned to LA, dropped off the truck, picked up my car and headed home, yet again.

"Are you home for good Jon?"

"I think so Dad, California isn't like it was even 10 years ago. I have two weeks before I report for duty and after I get the refresher course scheduled, I can lend a hand here."

"There's not much for you to do. The hay isn't ready for cutting and we filled the grain silos last fall during the market glut. We've been trying something new to feed the livestock. It's the standard COB mix plus 5% soybean meal and 5% distiller's grain. We get the meal from a biodiesel operation and the distiller's grain from an ethanol operation. The elevator blends it and we haul it out here to fill up the silos."

"Are you feeding the same mix to horses, cattle and chickens?"

"Yep. We experimented until we got a ratio that worked well with all three. Why didn't you just get a vehicle tow rig to pull with the U-Haul and make one trip instead of two?"

"By the time you figure the costs both ways, it comes out about the same. I made the round trip in less than 24 hours so it was only one day rental plus mileage. The other way would have been half the mileage, but would include renting the tow and drop off charges for the truck and tow."

"What do you make of this flu they're talking about on TV?"

"Don't know for sure. It could get bad because Mr. Li changed planes in Seoul and disembarked at LAX."

"Who is Mr. Li?"

"Mr. Li was the Chinese businessman who brought the flu into the country. We picked him up at the LAX Marriott and transported him to the ER. He died and my partner and I were quarantined. We were both vaccinated with the purified type A vaccine."

"What's this about a refresher course?"

“Arizona doesn’t have reciprocity with California. Since I’m certified by NREMT, all I have to do is take the Arizona ALS refresher course. Meanwhile, I will have a 6-month temporary Arizona certification. It’s just paperwork, money and a little time. Paramedics have to get continuing education and recertify periodically.”

“But you were a Corpsman Jon.”

“And I’ve been a Paramedic for almost ten years. It doesn’t make any difference, use it or lose it. I should have studied and became a Paramedic in Seattle, Washington. They have about the highest level of training of any Paramedics in the US. My Corpsman training would have come in handy up there. Their program is called Medic One.”

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It was no problem scheduling the Advanced Life Saving Refresher course and I did that that afternoon. I still had a week before I started the job so I spent much of the time riding and regaining callouses on my backside. My designated horses were a pair of American Quarter Horse geldings, one 5 and one 7. Though each had a separate saddle, their conformation was so close that either saddle could be used on either horse. Both had the same sire and dam. There was a nominal difference in coloring distinguishing the two.

Down in this area there were various species of venomous snakes and I carried my great grandfather’s Colt Frontier Six-Shooter and Winchester 92, both in .44-40. Three of the rounds in the revolver were modern snake shot shells and the two separating rounds were 200gr lead ball rounds. The local snakes included all but three or so of the venomous snakes found in Arizona. The greatest danger while riding was having my mount shy if we came upon a rattler. It was ‘better safe than sorry’.

My horses weren’t gun shy due to extensive training. Dad preferred the Indian method of horse training which began very early and took a full four years by the time the horses were trained not to shy at a gunshot. Indian method was probably best illustrated in the film, *The Horse Whisperer*. It began as soon as the foal had steady legs.

There was a time in the 2003-05 timespan where I was giving some serious thoughts to marriage. Sheila was born and raised in the Bay area. As such, she was both very liberal and very much pro-gun control. One was bad enough, but the combination was a bit more than I could handle. I discovered just how liberal she was when she ended up pregnant. We didn’t have an intimate relationship so I must have not been her ‘one true love’. As it happened, she wasn’t sure which of four men the father of her child was.

After that, I didn’t date and if I wanted to go dancing, I’d hit the bar scene. A fella could meet a nice gal out looking for a fun evening on the town with no expectations other than, perhaps, you buying her a couple of drinks. Met a few Ladies and some other

women not so Lady like, but a good time was had by all. If one of them got in her cups, I excused myself citing the need to get rest due to my job.

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I finally started on the new job more or less on probation until my skills could be assessed and I completed the ALS Refresher. It took little time for acceptance of my skill level. I was right in there with some of the more experienced Paramedics. My Refresher class began and it was mostly a review because I'd recertified less than 6 months before with the LAFD.

There was another Paramedic in the class doing her mandatory Refresher. She worked in a different location on a different shift. Anne was five years my junior and had a college degree in Biology. She suggested we 'get a cup of coffee' after the class ended one evening. It wasn't all that much different than stopping a drink so I said 'Sure'.

"You transferred in from the LAFD?"

"Yes. This class isn't that big of a deal since I recertified for the LAFD about 6 months ago."

"Where are you originally from?"

"Right here, Tucson. My family has a 1,280 acre cattle and horse operation not that far from the city. I'm staying at home for the moment. What about you?"

"Born and raised in Phoenix. I attended UA here in Tucson majoring in Biology. I was giving serious consideration to Medical School but decided it wasn't the career I wanted. I took the Paramedic training, passed the NREMT and was hired by the Tucson Fire Department. What's your background Jon?"

"Navy Corpsman working with the Marine Corps. Eight years active duty including A and C schools. When I got out in '01, I joined the LAFD and after completing the firefighter training program, I applied for Paramedic training. Must have been a natural due to my background because it didn't take long for me to be accepted. Completed the Paramedic Training and after passing NREMT, started my probation. Completed that successfully and worked as a Paramedic for the better part of 8 years.

"California is all but bankrupt and cut every corner they could to reduce expenses. My partner and I were involved in that H5N1 situation that came up. The carrier expired and we were started on Tamiflu and Probenecid plus being quarantined. When they were able to provide the purified type A vaccine we were both vaccinated. That's when I started thinking about moving back home. Tucson Fire Department had openings and I looked into it."

“My ex is a Deputy Sheriff with Pima County who got the 7 year itch early and I bailed immediately. We were waiting on children. Have you been married?”

“No. Came close once but lucky for me, she got pregnant and we didn’t have that type of relationship. The last I knew, she didn’t know which of her four lovers the father of the child was. Left a bad taste in my mouth and I limited my social life to bar hopping, for a couple of drinks and a little dancing. That got old eventually so I wasn’t overly socially active that last couple of years.”

“Do you have any hobbies?”

“My friend George is a DM in the Corps and got me involved in the shooting sports. Mostly recreational shooting although I do have around a half dozen firearms. Some are military style and some old fashion western style firearms. Those include my great grandfather’s Colt Frontier Six-Shooter and Winchester 92, both in .44-40. They’re what I carry when I ride.”

“Which military style firearms?”

“Springfield Armory M-21, a Mossberg 590A1 SPX, Glock 21 and Glock 30 plus a sniper rifle.”

“Barrett?”

“McMillan Tac-50. I got the rifle one Christmas and the suppressor and extra magazines the following Christmas.”

“They’re made in Phoenix.”

“Yes, they are. What hobbies do you enjoy?”

“I ride at every opportunity. I’ve only recently gotten involved in shooting because I’ve only recently started getting involved in prepping. It’s a long haul and expensive. I have excellent Trauma and Only Aid kits. My firearms are limited to a Ruger SR-556, a Browning Hi-Power and a Remington 11-87 Police model shotgun. Other than that, I have the one year deluxe food supply from Walton Feed on order.”

“Sounds like you given prepping some thought.”

“A person has to Jon. Many of the items I mentioned are expensive and I don’t have the money to change course in mid-stream. My next major planned purchase is 5.56, 9mmP and an assortment of 12 gauge ammo plus some load bearing equipment.”

“You may want to check out either FMCO or some decent ALICE gear. I’m not enchanted with the MOLLE gear.”

“Any suggestions on what I should consider so far as ammo goes?”

“I’d probably go with Brenneke slugs, Remington 00 and # 4 buckshot for the shotgun. Right now there's a fair amount of the Lake City/Federal 5.56 in both the 55gr M193 and 62gr M855. If it were me, I’d buy Speer Lawman in 124gr 9mm and Speer Gold Dot 124gr +P.”

“In what quantities?”

“A case each of slugs and #4 buck and two cases of 00. I’d split the difference and get around 3,000 rounds of M193 and the same of M855. Get it on stripper clips if you can. If I had to choose only one 5.56 round, I probably go with the M855. For 9mm, I’d get 2,000 of Lawman 124gr and 1,000 of Gold Dot 124gr +P. The Lawman is practice ammo and the Gold Dot is carry ammo. What do you have for a knife?”

“Only a Swiss Army knife for now; any recommendations?”

“Cold Steel makes good knives so maybe a Recon Tanto San Mai III.”

“It’s getting late and I have to go. Let me get the check.”

“Go ahead, I’ll buy this time.”

After that, Anne and I usually got coffee after the classes, taking turns buying. As she began to accumulate the ammo, she kept me up to date. Her first purchase of 10 cans of M855 on stripper clips, 420 rounds and a stripper clip guide in each can. Next, she bought the 9mm ammo in the types, bullet weight and quantities I suggested. Finally she bought the 4 cases of 12 gauge.

Anne bought up the possibility of coming out to the ranch to go riding. We compared schedules and found several dates when we were both off duty. I suggested we could go riding on several of the days and go out for dinner on those nights. She countered, suggesting we could take in a movie on some of the nights.

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Anne and I dated for over a year. I decided that I’d found my soul mate and purchased a set of rings. The set included two plain wedding bands and 65 point diamond solitaire. Because I helped Dad during my off time, he gave me a portion of the profits in lieu of wages. I spent my share plus a portion of my savings on a Magnum Universal Night Sight for the Tac-50. When I had more money available, I planned on adding a MUNS to my M-21.

I was as nervous as a long tailed cat in a room of rocking chairs, but screwed up my courage and proposed. With a glint in her eye, she asked if I was prepared to support her in a manner to which she hoped to become accustomed. I responded that I would to

the best of my ability and she accepted. The next step was a trip to Phoenix to meet her parents. That went well if I do say so myself. She had already met my parents so we were down to setting a date and finding a house.

We found a 4 bedroom, 2½ bath split foyer about halfway between the ranch and work. I applied for a VA home loan and was approved. The home needed a bit of work to get it ready to occupy and we pulled the carpet, painted and replaced the carpet and vinyl. Described as a 'fixer upper', we got the home for a song. I dug my furniture out of storage and used it to furnish the home, planning on replacing the old with new as money and time permitted.

The lower level was finished and had seen little use, allowing us to get by with painting and shampooing the carpet. The fourth bedroom was on the lower level and we turned it into a study. Commercial power and phone was available but the gas was propane, the sewer was septic and the water came from a well on the property. The 3 stall garage was detached and served as a combination garage, well house and generator room. The generator was an Onan RS 15000.

Anne and I didn't have a honeymoon. I didn't have enough accumulated vacation and there were still several changes we wanted to make to our new home. For example, I wanted a blast/bomb/storm shelter with an air purification system, either buried or constructed as a double walled above ground shelter. After comparing the cost of both options, we went with the buried shelter. The cost of the excavation was more than offset by the cost of the larger outside wall.

After construction was complete and the shelter connected to the basement wall via a pedestrian underpass, we made a list of equipment needed to equip the shelter. Anne chose to continue to work and between our two incomes, it only took a few months to install the Safe Cell, valves and piping. Next, we began to replace my old furniture with new and moved the old to the shelter.

The shelter was poured reinforced concrete 8" thick on the sides and overhead. The floor was a standard 4" floor and it covered the fresh water pipes, propane lines and black water tank. A manhole allowed access to the black water tank pump that pumped contents to the septic tank. In terms of size, the footprint was the same as the house, 56' long by 36' wide.

One-third of the space was divided off with a conventional, insulated wall covered by ¾" drywall on both sides with a solid core door. The area, about 672ft², was intended as storage and space for the Onan RS 15000. It was already extra quiet due to the excellent muffler. Although rated at 133 amps, our elevation was around 2500' above mean sea level (msl) and I derated the generator 7% to reflect the elevation meaning we still had about 124 amps available.

The ATS was a 100 amp unit and we contracted out the generator move and relocation of the ATS. The main power lines now fed the panels in the storage room. A plumber

added an additional propane line, capping the line to the garage. Although Anne and I had a 21ft³ upright freezer we bought a 25ft³ chest type, when Sears had them on sale, for the shelter. We proceed to fill the chest slowly, only buying meat, fruit and vegetables when they were on sale. We wrapped the cuts in a layer plastic, added Kraft paper and finally sealed the packages in Seal-a-meal vacuum packs. When Dad butchered, he divided a beef with us and when it came time for pork, he bought two rather than one market weight hog and we added the meat to our freezer.

“Jon, I’m 32 and if we’re going to have a family, we better get started.”

“I agree. Stop taking the pill and once we’re expecting, we’ll plan further from there. We just about have the home refurnished and the shelter completed. We have 6 one year deluxe LTS food supplies from Walton and have nearly everything we need for the shelter.”

“What are we missing?”

“Nothing really expensive. A CB base station, tower and antenna. I haven’t installed the ten band vertical for the ham radio since we don’t have the tower. I think the cheapest approach would to install a telephone or utility pole and mount the ham antenna on top and the CB antenna on a standoff. Since we both have Cobra 148 GTLs, I was thinking maybe a pair of Cobra HH 38 WX ST Hand Helds and a Galaxy DX2547 base station. I think an Antron A99 antenna with the ground plane kit would be as good as anything for the base station antenna.”

“We might just as well spend the money now before it loses any more purchasing power, don’t you agree?”

“Absolutely. Thinking back on it, I wish I’d purchased more gold and silver. After the initial buy, I allocated 10% of my take home pay and set up a purchasing plan. You’re the only person besides me that knows about it. Although I didn’t really get it rolling until 2003, and the prices kept rising, that gave me an additional 8 years of buying. When gold got out of sight, I limited my purchases to junk silver.”

“Looking back on it, I wish I’d done the same.”

“How about we get our final purchases out of the way and add additional LTS food supplies?”

“We could do that, but I’m a little concerned about the size of our propane tank. If something were to happen, 3,000 gallons of propane wouldn’t go far. Do you think we could get a second tank?”

“I’m sure the largest tank we could get would probably be a 1,100 gallon tank. I should look for a used agricultural tank. They run from ten to thirty thousand gallons. It would probably run, on average, 50 cents per gallon.”

“Who would know where you could find one?”

“I think maybe I’ll start with Dad.”

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“Do you know of anyone who has a used propane tank for sale?”

“A couple of people Jon, how big do you want?”

“The one we have holds about 3,000 gallons net. The ATS limits the generator to 100 amps which is about 75% power. At that level, it burns 2.1 gallons per hour. Burning 2.1gph for 8,766 hours is a bit over 18,000 gallons. I guess that means we’d need at least a 15,000 gallon tank, net.”

“So, a 20 or a 30?”

“Well yes, we wouldn’t have to fill it complete full.”

“How about a used anhydrous ammonia tank?”

“Rated 250 psi?”

“Yep, the same as propane.”

“You know of one?”

“Not a 20 but I know where there are 30s for sale.”

“How much?”

“Twelve.”

“It would probably take a loan.”

“I’ll buy it and you can pay me off with six percent interest. Bank doesn’t pay anything on savings these days. Six percent is the minimum rate I can charge you and less than a bank would charge on a loan for a used tank.”

“Deal. I’ll need an excavation.”

“Take the tractor with the backhoe and bucket. You can dig the hole on you days off and I’ll wait to have the tank transported until you need it.”

“We haven’t had a fill lately, what’s propane running?”

“Bulk price is around \$2.75. Think you two can handle one truckload a month?”

“That’s \$8,250 a month... maybe one truckload a quarter and that’s iffy.”

In plain English, Dad was suggesting we fill the tank in 9 months to a 90% fill level or 27,000 gallons. My response suggested the same fill level over 9 quarters or 27 minus 2 equals twenty-five months. Assuming the propane prices didn’t rise, unlikely, it would total almost seventy-five thousand. I’d have to fire up my printing press and print 750 Ben Franklins. Yeah, right.

“I talked to Dad. He knows where we can get a thirty with a new relief valve for twelve thousand. He said he’d buy it and we can pay it off with six percent interest.”

“I’m glad I didn’t call Walton. Let’s get squared away on a propane tank and add at least one load plus top off our existing tank. We can get a utility pole and complete the communications equipment acquisitions and installations.”

“Anne, what’s your greatest fear?”

“An economic collapse. It takes more money to buy less every time we go to the store. We’ve been in a recession since 2008. It’s starting to look like we’re going to end up in a depression. You watch the stock markets, tell me I wrong.”

“No, they’ve been on a roller coaster since mid-2011 and into this year. I wouldn’t want to be in the shoes of the Republican that takes the presidency from Obama. With the Appeals Court holding part of Obamacare unconstitutional and the government appealing to the Supreme Court he’s going to have trouble being a 2 term president.”

“When will they issue their ruling?”

“Probably before they adjourn. They heard it late last November.”

“I’m off tomorrow, what do you want me to get out of the way?”

“Buy the hand held CBs and order the Galaxy base station. Galaxy sells the antenna and ground plane kit so you can get all of that from them.”

“Write down the model numbers of the radio and the antenna, please.”

“I will and I’ll pick up a big coil of RG-8 and the connectors.”

“Do you want me to check on utility poles?”

“Yes, please.”

When All Else Fails – Chapter 2

“I found a source for the utility poles, Arizona Pacific Wood Preserving in Eloy. I got their number but it was too late to call. Eloy is about half way to Phoenix. You can call tomorrow and get a quote.”

“I will. Could you drop me off at Dad’s so I can drive the backhoe and bucket back?”

“Are you going to dig the hole for the tank?”

“Yes, Dad suggested it.”

“Let’s go. You be careful using that backhoe.”

“I will. It’s only four miles so the drive back should only take fifteen minutes or so.”

“Do you want me to follow you back?”

“No. You can come back and get supper on the table. There’s beef roast with onions, carrots and potatoes in the oven and it should be done when you get back.”

It took me twenty minutes because I had to fill the gas tank on the Ford. The tractor had been new when my grandfather owned the ranch. In addition to the bucket and backhoe, he had a blade, two bottom plow and the extra wagon that they used to haul things around the ranch. Dad had a newer John Deere that they used for mowing and baling the hay. The straw, like the grain, was purchased.

Not only did we get a utility pole (new), we acquired the missing antennas, coax, grounding rod, Alpha Delta lightning arrestors and more. The more came in the form of several good, used Motorola CP-200 handhelds and CM-300s, all VHF. It meant adding another standoff and another cable run. The utility pole was 110’ long before installation and was buried 12’ deep and the tapered hole (wider at the bottom) filled with concrete.

The RG-8 was run down the pole in a grounded conduit and the cables then routed through the lightning arrestors before being routed to the shelter. One, universal, cable was run from the shelter to the study allowing any of the radios to be monitored from there. Our initial setup was to put the CB in the study and the remaining radios in the grounded Faraday cage I made from an office cabinet and a spool of fine cooper mesh screening.

Meanwhile, I’d completed the excavation and Dad had the tank delivered. I hired a truck mounted crane to set the tank in place and back filled the hole to the midline of the tank with rock. We got AmeriGas to install fill fittings and the pipe and I routed the large tank to the smaller tank, connecting the outlets with a Tee. There was also a manual shutoff

valve before the Tee that extended to ground level and allowed us to open or close the feed from the new tank. Once completed, I used the bucket to finish filling the hole with dirt and used the tractor to tamp it. All of the excavated soil was used in the tamping process, creating a low mound several feet wide.

The tank fill pipe was inside a larger pipe and covered. Similarly, a pipe with a cover, extended to the shutoff valve and I had a shutoff valve wrench that could reach the valve and turn it ¼ turn to open or close the line. It would remain closed until we got our first load of propane. Before we could do that, we had to first top off our existing tank.

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We topped our old tank and a quarter later, added 3,000 gallons to the new tank. We did that for three additional quarters. We also managed to pay back a portion of the tank loan. Anne was pregnant and was taken off runs as soon as she began to show. She was given an office job through her 8th month and went on maternity leave. We had the tank paid off and another two loads in the tank by the time she went on leave.

It would take three more loads to complete filling the new tank. Mom and Dad gave us one load for Christmas bringing the contents up to 21,000 gallons. Anne and squeaked out enough to top off the regular tank around the same time.

The November 2012 elections came and went and we got change... again... in the form of a conservative Republican president and a conservative female vice president. I began to wonder how long it would take to replace the Chairman of the Federal Reserve. About the first major gaff the new president made after he announced his candidacy was to call the Chairman a traitor. Bernanke's term didn't expire until 2020.

For us, coping with the economy and finishing off our major preps began to get complicated. I needed ten cases of 750gr A-MAX match for my Tac-50, ten cases of 168gr A-MAX Superperformance match for my M-21, two more loads of propane, replacement of our STS of food, another MUNS if possible and assorted and sundry other things.

Internationally, we'd completed the draw down in Iraq leaving a couple of Brigades in the ongoing training of Iraq's military. The drawdown in Afghanistan occurred as departing units weren't replaced. Despite Obama's intention to end our involvement by the end of 2014, our new president accelerated the drawdown. He was well aware of 'Russia's Vietnam' and didn't want a second for the US.

He was also well aware of the veiled threats made by Russia in mid-2011 over possible US involvement in Syria. They had claimed that the real reason for the US involvement was only a stepping stone to further surround Iran leading up to action against the Iranians over their nuclear ambitions. It was uncertain what the new president intended to do as he'd avoided the issue on the campaign trail and when pressed claimed that all options were on the table.

With the White House in the Republican camp as well as both houses of Congress, it seemed possible that we might actually get change. However, the Republicans only held 58 Senate seats and a 62% margin in the House. While new legislation might be forced through Congress at the president's request, a Senate filibuster could stop it and if the new president did veto a bill, Congress couldn't override the veto.

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Joshua Harry DeSoto weighed 6 pounds 14 ounces at birth. Harry was my Dad's first name and Mom's was Diane. Anne's Dad's first name was Clyde and her Mom's was Evelyn. Depending on the size of our family and the genders of our children, it was possible we might end up using all four names.

Anne's Dad worked for Dial (soap) and was reaching retirement age. Well not as well off as my parent's; they had a very good retirement package between the company retirement and their 401k. They had accumulated nominal amounts of hard currency as a hedge over the years in an unallocated Kitco Pool Account. Since their holdings exceeded \$75,000, the metals had to be shipped via armored car when they decided to take possession. There was little relation to the purchase price and the current market value.

Clyde and Evelyn had been investing in precious metals since he'd worked for Dial Corporation. The pool account contained about 40 years of accumulated purchases. Surprisingly, Anne was unaware of their various retirement preparations. Thus, it came as a surprise when they announced that they were considering selling their home and moving to the Tucson area.

Even with the burst of the housing bubble, most of the sales price of their home would represent a capital gain unless they acquired a like property within the mandated time frame. Apparently Clyde had talked to Dad about acquiring a home down here and Dad knew of several acreages on the market. They chose a small 5 acre plot with a relatively new home.

Using their 401k distribution, Clyde and Evelyn purchased the acreage and put their Phoenix home on the market at a low, but firm, price. When Anne tried to call her Mom, she got a disconnected phone message and we were planning on driving up the next weekend to find out what was going on. On Thursday, Anne got a call from her Mom asking if she was free to help unpacking their china and kitchen supplies.

"Sure Mom, we were planning on coming up this weekend anyway to find out why your phone was disconnected."

"You know that small acreage between where you live and where Harry and Diane live?"

“Yes I do what about it?”

“That’s where we live now.”

“What? I’ll be right over!”

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I was the oldest and only child. Mom and Dad had a second baby that died 3 days after birth. At the doctor’s suggestion, Mom had a tubal ligation. Anne was also an only child because Clyde and Evelyn only wanted one child. Before I move on to other equally mundane topics, I should point out that our shelter was large enough for all three families.

Long story short, when I got off shift, we had guests for dinner. Can’t say shocked is the right word concerning Clyde and Evelyn’s move; very, very surprised may cover it. Their acreage, like ours was about 40 rods wide by 80 rods deep (330’x660’). The stretch along the road had been subdivided into 5 acre parcels and the remaining acres behind us used primarily to grow hay. It extended all the way to the ranch and after the third cutting was opened for grazing. Some of those cattle behind our place were Dad’s. The hay field was 4,600’ deep by 3 miles long, about 1,666 acres and the pre-subdivision area was three sections. There were 48 lots, each with a home in the 3 mile stretch.

“What do you think of your new home?”

“It needs a few things.”

“What?”

“To start off with, a generator and fuel. I think we’ll add a detached garage with a stall for each of our cars, a pickup and that generator.”

“You’re a prepper?”

“In a way, I suppose. I started to accumulate fresh out of college when I went to work for Dial. Besides Social Security, we have my pension, a 401k plan that we just cashed out and had a Kitco Pool account, 50-50 gold and silver. They had to use an armored car to deliver the precious metals to my bank in Phoenix. I pull it right out and locked it up in an old safe in our basement.

“Used the 401k cash to pay for this place and we just sold the place in Phoenix so we’ll use this place as our rollover. Considering the rate of inflation, were going to spent those proceeds as soon as they’re in our bank account. That will pay for the garage, generator, installation and a full tank of propane. I noticed you had a Tac-50, so I bought one of those, complete. Need ammo, do you have any recommendations?”

“Hornady 750gr A-MAX Match. That’s what Rob Furlong used in Afghanistan.”

“He’s that Canadian sniper?”

“He sure is.”

“Good enough, how many rounds?”

“That’s a matter of personal choice. It’s packed 200 rounds per case and I have nine and a fraction cases.”

“What did the ten cases run you?”

“Right at ten thousand.”

“What’s that old saying? Oh yeah, buy it cheap and stack it deep. I’ll get twenty-five cases. Now, what about other firearms?”

“I have a Springfield Armory M-21 and Anne has a Ruger SR-556. My shotgun is a Mossberg 590A1 SPX while hers is a Remington 11-87 police model. She has a Browning Hi-Power while I have a Glock 21 plus a Glock 30 for backup. My knife is a Cold Steel San-Mai III Laredo Bowie backed up with the OKC3S Marine Corps Bayonet. Anne has a Cold Steel San-Mai III Recon Tanto. Plus we both have Buck 110 Folding Hunters.”

“We’ll probably do the same on the handguns and shotguns. I’m leaning towards the SR-556 for Evelyn and a Super Match for me. I’ve done some reading on bullet weights and think I’ll use 168gr A-MAX Match and some of their game loads.

“You’ll like it Daddy, pricey, but you get what you pay for. Ruger has nearly four decades of experience building gas piston rifles.”

“I agree Clyde since M-21 is a Super Match with a different stock. You can order magazines online from forty four mag dot com. They’re the same CMI magazines Springfield sells but half the price. Ruger only charges fifteen bucks for the 30 round SR-556 magazine.”

“What do you have for a generator, diesel or propane?”

“Propane, an Onan RS 15000. We have the original 3,000 gallon tank that came with the house and added a 30,000 gallon tank we’re working on filling.”

“Anne, do you intend on going back to work or are you going to be a stay at home Mom?”

“We haven’t discussed it Mom, but, if I had my druthers, I wouldn’t return to work. We still need 6,000 gallons of propane to fill the tank and more ammunition to round out our stocks. I almost have to return to work.”

“What would it take to get you to stay home?”

“The propane and ammo would be a good start Daddy.”

“Done deal. As soon as we find a tank and get it installed, we’ll finish filling yours as well as filling ours. Jon, what do you use in 7.62 NATO?”

“We use 750gr A-MAX Match in the Tac-50 and 168gr A-MAX Superperformance Match in the M-21. Pistol ammo is all Speer Lawman and Gold Dot. Shotgun is Brenneke slugs, Remington 00 and # 4 buckshot, both Remington. Use M855, or M855A1 if you can find it, for the Ruger.”

“If you need ammo Jon, I could probably get a volume discount from Hornady. Make a list and I’ll include it in my order.”

“Are you sure Clyde? We’re talking some real money here.”

“Best to spend it now before it loses its purchasing power. We’ll hold onto the precious metals for the time being. We’ll still have the cash from Social Security and my Dial pension. I doubt that either will actually keep up with the rate of inflation we’re currently experiencing. Other than a small cash reserve for items we may have missed, I think I’ll do what Neal Grant did in that fiction story *The Hermit*.”

“You’re preppers?”

“We just accumulated money and hard assets so we could do something when I retired. I’m kind of a TOM and Jerry fan. The writers, not the cartoon characters.”

“After Furlong made the record shot, you may have noticed that TOM switched from the Barrett M82A1M to the Tac-50. He mentioned the difference in accuracy in some of his stories.”

“Sold me, that’s for sure. We need to get back home and do a few more things before bedtime. Anne, I’m serious about you not going back to work. However, I think you should maintain your NREMT registration and take whatever classes you need to keep current.”

“Ok, I’ll think about it.”

Clyde and Evelyn left and I helped clean up the kitchen and load the dishwasher. A thought occurred to me, so I asked.

“Do you ever regret not going to medical school?”

“Not really. Do you have any idea how long it takes to become a doctor? I took all of the pre-medical course work. Medical school is four years with the first half classwork and the USMLE part 1, and the last two years as sub-intern in a teaching hospital and you take part 2 of the USMLE. That’s eight years on top of the four you put in to get your Bachelor’s degree. After that, you work as an intern for a year and take part 3 of the USMLE. If you choose to specialize, your residency can run from 3 to 5 years and you have to become Board Certified in your specialty. In the US, students pay for their own education and it’s expensive and takes a long time.”

“Complicated huh?”

“That’s why doctors get high fees; they have to pay back the loans they took out to go through a minimum of 5 years of training just to become a General Practitioner. Recently most states require a residency to become a GP. Cardiologists do a 5 year residency and some other the same or lesser amount of time.”

“But you will maintain your NREMT registration, won’t you?”

“You want me to stay at home?”

“Considering what your parents offered to help us with, I think you should. What could be better for Josh than having a Paramedic caring for him? If they get the propane and ammo, we can handle the assorted and sundry other things. I have a MUNS at the top of my list for my M-21. You should have a TA31RCO ACOG on your SR-556. I’ll talk to George about that and the MUNS.”

“If I remember, the MUNS was very expensive.”

“Retail is around eleven grand and I paid \$5,000, cash. I can probably get the AGOG included for \$5,500 cash.”

“George?”

“He’s getting out on a medical discharge as soon as he finishes rehab.”

“Did he get shot?”

“No, it was an IED and he was one of the lucky ones. He lost his left leg from just below the knee and he wrote me that they’ve fitted him with an artificial limb and he’s in rehab. George has a lot of contacts he developed over the years and he’ll probably get on the Gunny’s network and get whatever we need, free. I pay him for the MUNS and ACOG.”

“He’s a Gunnery Sergeant?”

"I guess I didn't mention that he got a promotion before he shipped out for Afghanistan this time. He has a tad over 20 years in so I don't know if he'll retire or take the medical."

"Is he married?"

"Only to the Corps. His gun collection rivals mine. After he shot my Tac-50, he bought one and it's stored at his folks with the rest of his armory. He supplied my MUNS and managed to acquire a few things from a sticky fingered logistics sergeant that are also stored in his armory. He mentioned LAWs, M-67s and an assortment of other hand grenades plus Mk 211 MP and a couple of M-203 with 40mm grenades."

"If he gets caught..."

"They'll lock him up in Leavenworth and weld the door shut. I know. But, it's like what a former president said when he heard about Israel bombing Osiraq, *Well, boys will be boys.*"

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I let George know what I wanted and told him to make it two ACOGs if he could manage it. Two months later, I got a call from George. He was home and had 'the things I wanted' plus some extras. I went to see him.

"You owe me six large for the MUNS and two ACOGs. I can give you an M-203 but you'll have to give me \$5 each for the 40mm grenades. I'll trade you round for round Mk 211 for Hornady 750gr A-MAX match. I'll give you five LAWs but any more will cost you \$50 each. M-67s will cost you \$3 each and the same goes for any of the hand grenades I can spare. I figured you'd want an assortment so I put together a package that includes 30 defensive, 10 offensive, 10 incendiary, 10 Willy Pete and 10 of each color of smoke. Bring the ammo and your checkbook and we can do business."

"How are you getting along with the prosthesis?"

"Got 50% disability out of the deal. Permanent. I can get around pretty good, but it sets off metal detectors at airports. How old is the baby now?"

"Six months. And we're expecting a second child. Anne decided not to return to work when her father made her an offer she couldn't refuse."

"What did it take?"

"Ten cases each of .50 cal and .308 cal Hornady Match plus six thousand gallons of propane."

"You're talking some big money there, buddy."

“Right. It was on my want list along with the MUNS. The ACOG was a last minute choice after I priced the model the Corps uses. We’re pretty well squared away should something of monumental proportions happen. That includes the shelter, generator, plenty of fuel, enough food for the moment and so forth. We need to get more food for the shelter and additional spare parts and filters for the generator. I bought 4 drums of 15w-40 oil and that tapped me out at the time so I didn’t get the parts or filters.

“We did get spare electronics for our vehicles and they’re stored in the faraday cabinet in the shelter. EMP isn’t strictly limited to a nuclear weapon, you know. A CME or a sever solar flare could have the same effect.”

“That’s why I kept my old Suburban. When the engine needed a total rebuild, I replaced it with a 6BT boxed Cummins diesel. All of my radios are on slide out mounts too. When I had time and an auto shop available, I added skid plates, front receiver hitch and so forth. Got a 12k Warn winch that will work of front or back. There’s more I want to do as I have time and money. I thought about a Safe Cell, but there’re just too many places that I’d need to seal up to use one effectively.”

“How about we load up what you have for me in your Suburban and you follow me home? You can meet Anne and Joshua, we’ll swap out the .50 caliber and I’ll write you a check.”

“Anything extra?”

“Not at the moment. Ten cans of Mk 211 if you have it will get you six cases of the Hornady. I’ll go with the hand grenade assortment you put together and the five LAWs plus the M-203. I’ll buy two dozen of the HEDP rounds. You got 100% disability, right?”

“Nope, one leg is 50% plus I have over 20 in and that retirement can start right away giving me 100% of the base pay for an E-7 with over 20 years, \$4,691.70 per month or \$56,300.40 per year.”

“And you can still work?”

“If I can find a job I can do with a peg leg I can. Maybe a delivery job if I can find one. Most of the time sitting on my butt behind a steering wheel and a little time on my feet.”

“You ready to load up?”

“Let’s get it done.”

“Let me call Anne and give her a heads up. We’re having hamburgers and fries and there are plenty of both.”

“Anne, George Burns. George, my wife Anne.”

“Got the pick of the litter I see.”

“Sure did. If you can believe it, I met Anne in an ALS Refresher class and she invited me out to coffee.”

“Really? Maybe I should take an ALS Refresher class.”

“They broke the mold.”

“I guess I’ll have to try church then. Met lots of gals in bars but none that were marriage material, despite what they thought. Ready to unload?”

“Supper is ready fellas.”

“Ok, we do that after we eat.”

George was two years my senior which may explain in part why I didn’t meet him until I was assigned as a Corpsman to his Marine unit. That also meant that he was seven years older than Anne. She was a little clinging; I think she was trying to tell George in a roundabout way that she was only interested in me. After supper, we unloaded his Suburban into the shelter and loaded the six cases of Hornady in the Suburban. Then I wrote him a check and he said there was more should I need it.

Although I had intended to mount the M-201A2 on Anne’s rifle, I thought better of it and ordered a SR-556 in 6.8 SPC and ammo from Hornady, their 110-grain BTHP tactical load. It was cheaper than the .308, but not much. I gave the ACOG to Evelyn as I had originally intended, but managed to squeak the price of an ACOG for my new rifle with the BDC for the 6.8 SPC. They had two models, one with a red horseshoe and the second with amber. I selected red to match Anne’s ACOG.

The 6.8 SPC was so much better than the 5.56 that I wished that Anne had gotten the 6.8 instead of the 5.56. However 5.56 was cheap and we really could buy it cheap and stack it deep. Realizing that not every use of my M-21 would be a sniping situation, I picked up a bunch of DAG surplus 7.62. I could pretty much shoot the 6.8 to the range of the ACOG, 800 meters, and the bullet had enough oomph to do some damage.

If it wasn’t one thing, it seemed to be another. The market was still on its roller coaster ride rising one day to ‘good’ news and falling the next day due to more ‘bad’ news. Gold just kept rising and was just shy of \$2,000. We three families each had precious metals on hand and George mentioned that he’d purchase some in the \$1,800 range so he could average the cost of his holdings slightly higher and reduce his gains.

Once he found a job as a delivery man and had met Rachael in church, they started coming out to the ranch to go riding with us. George didn’t have a ’92 or a Colt Frontier Six-Shooter in .44-40. He had three Colt SAAs in .45 Colt, one in each barrel length. He

had two Winchester Legacy models with the 24" barrels also in .45 Colt and finally a Marlin 1895 Cowboy in .45-70 that he'd had for a long time. He said it was just a phase he'd gone through.

When All Else Fails – Chapter 3

George had gotten the Paladin holster from Alfonso's of Hollywood and the Laredo crossdraw rig from Kirkpatrick in Laredo. Kirkpatrick also supplied the three rifle scabbards he owned along with bandoleers for .45 Colt, .45-70 and 12 gauge. The first two bandoleers had sixty loops each and the 12 gauge had 30.

"George, can you tell what went down in Afghanistan?"

"I suppose. It actually started stateside. I was coming up on 20 and thinking about getting out. Masters Guns said I was at the top of the promotion list but they were thinking about giving it to someone else unless I re-upped. Hell, I'd already done two in Iraq and two in Afghanistan so I figured, why not. We were almost halfway through the tour when it happened.

"It was a five vehicle convoy, two Ma Deuces front and back and an Mk 19 in the middle. Between the Hummers were HEMTTs to haul the troops and equipment back from the FOB we were in transit to. They said it was an UXO, an Mk-82 500 pound bomb. Anyway the Afghans had recovered it and rigged a radio triggered detonator of some type. They set it off about one second too soon or all of us would have been killed. As it was, the driver, gunner and Marine in the portside back seat were killed outright.

"A piece of metal cut my lower left leg off slick as a whistle and I was bleeding to death. The guy behind me took a piece of metal in the chest and blood was pouring from his heart they told me. Our corpsman was in the middle Hummer and he threw a tourniquet on me and checked the Marine behind me. He had died so I got all the corpsman's attention. They called in Medevac and started two IVs with Ringers, or so I learned later. When I finally regained consciousness I was on a Carrier recovering from surgery.

"They shipped me back to Bethesda and when they could fit me with the peg leg. It's the latest thing and the ankle is somewhat flexible so I can pretty much walk like normal, say about 95% of normal. Of course on the off chance that something like that could happen, all my personal possessions were here in Tucson. They kept me at Bethesda four months in rehab and gave the medical retirement. While I was finishing up rehab, I also put in for my 20 year retirement."

"And between the two, you're getting 100% of the base pay for a 20 plus year E-7?"

“That plus what I earn as a delivery man. I’ve been looking at that piece of property next to you on the west. I like the house. What’s the deal with all the empty homes along this stretch of road?”

“They were built in the early 2000s at the height of the housing boom. They were priced on what the market would bear, not the actual value and most of the buyers ended up being foreclosed on when the bubble burst and they couldn’t keep up the payments. Dad says that some just packed up and walked away. Anne’s parents moved here from Phoenix when he retired and they live halfway between our place and the ranch.”

“So, what did they do, cut a row of 5 acre lots off the three sections and build 48 homes?”

“Yes and the remainder of the three sections are planted in alfalfa. They take three cuttings and then open the land up for grazing. Dad runs his cattle back there part of the year.”

“So you get your beef from your father?”

“Yes and he buys pork from a neighbor and we get our pork from him too. They raise chickens so we also get eggs and meat from them. Dad doesn’t do dairy and we find it easier to buy milk from the grocery store. When Anne’s parents moved here, he increased his flock so he could supply them with chickens too. He gets too many eggs for the three families and sells most of his eggs to the dairy. He raises Rhode Island Reds so the eggs are brown.”

“Does he raise broilers?”

“Yes, but they’re a different breed, Cornish-Rocks. They’re butchered at 3½ pounds. He has 75 laying hens and 200 broilers. Both flocks are yarded, separately and he only buys hens to avoid fertile eggs. Of course that’s not likely since he clips the wings.”

“How come you don’t have any horses?”

“But I do, George, I’m an only child. We have 4 geldings identified as our regular riding horses. We don’t really have enough space for a barn and pasture so it’s easier to leave them here. Dad has the grain silos and the hay and straw and I’d be duplicating what he has just to have the horses closer.”

“Rachael, are you from Tucson? I was born and raised in Phoenix.”

“No Anne, I was born in Iowa and raised in Missouri, down in the Ozarks. You’ve heard of Rolla?”

“Heard yes, Jerry wrote about it in some of his stories. Other than that, I don’t have a clue.”

“Route 66 ran through the town and now I-44 runs from St. Louis to Springfield. Who is Jerry?”

“Jerry D Young is one of a pair of prolific fiction writers. He uses his name while the other guy, Gary D Ott, goes by Tired Old Man. Most of the people on the forum where they used to post their works called him TOM. The pair kind of reminds Jon and me of the cartoon characters, Tom and Jerry. TOM lives in Palmdale, California and Jerry lives in Reno, Nevada.”

“You said used to post.”

“For whatever reason he had, the owner of that website took down all of the posted stories including the archived stories from before 2006. You can get Jerry’s stories at several websites including his own, jerrydyoung dot com. From a comment TOM posted on the website, he’s working on a CD to be sold from Jerry’s website and his new stories will probably be posted there.”

“Working on?”

“Yeah, eliminating ten thousand typos and various mistakes like pre-headspaced Ma Deuce barrels. The funny thing is that the new M2E2 has a pre-headspaced, quick change barrel.”

“It does, among several other changes,” George added. “Of course most gunners pre-headspaced their regular barrel by turning the barrel all the way in and backing them out until the headspacing was correct. Then, they wrote the number of clicks out on a tag they attached to the barrel. It’s not quite as fast as the new E2, but it got the job done most of the time.

“The E2 includes:

- Fixed headspace and timing configuration (eliminates safety concerns associated with barrel changing)
- Quick-change barrel (QCB) system
- Manual safety
- Flash hider
- Removable barrel handle to simplify hot-barrel changing.”

“Got a chance to use them, I take it?”

“I had one on my Hummer and on the third Hummer, as a matter of fact.”

“Did you ever get a chance to meet Hathcock?”

“White Feather? Nope. My loss I suppose. Although he didn’t have the highest ‘official’ kill count, I’m positive that he had the most kills.”

“Who are you talking about and what do you mean by kills?”

“Rachael, he was a Marine sniper during Vietnam. Official kills had to have two witnesses besides the sniper, including an officer. That record belongs to Adelbert Waldron, an Army sniper with 109 confirmed kills. Hathcock probably had 300 kills although only 93 were confirmed. A Marine sniper named Eric England had 98 confirmed and another Marine, Chuck Mawhinney, had 103 confirmed kills. Gunny Hathcock was only 55 days away from retiring when he was given a medical retirement due to multiple sclerosis.”

“He got a bum deal.”

“At least he has a rifle named after him, the M-25 White Feather put out by Springfield Armory.”

“I don’t like that rifle because it has no provisions for iron sights.”

“I didn’t buy one either Jon. I settled for the M-21 the same as you did.”

“So if you and Rachael decide to get married are you going to turn her into a gun nut too?”

“That’s up to her. However, I did buy a SR-556 in 6.8 SPC and got the appropriate ACOG. I already have a Hi-Power, a Walther PPK in .380 and a spare 590A1 SPX.”

“What about hunting guns?”

“Remington 870 Express combo and cherry Winchester 9422s.”

“Long rifle or WMR?”

“Both. The LR only had a few rounds through it and I doubt the WMR was ever fired.”

“Recent purchases?”

“No. I bought them after Winchester brought out the XTR models. I also bought the 94 in .30-30 and .375 Winchester Big Bore. The .375 ammo is hard to find, but I located a couple of sources.”

“George, I think we should be going.”

“Sure thing. By the way Jon, how about you call me Gunny from now on? I like it better than George.”

“Sure thing Gunny.”

“What did you think of Rachael?”

“She could just be the one for Gunny. I think it depends on whether she’s a shooter or not. She’s reasonably attractive and they did meet in church so she’s a Catholic too.”

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After Gunny proposed and Rachael accepted, they made an offer on the home he talked about. The bank accepted the offer and George applied for a VA loan which was quickly approved. After escrow closed, they were married and moved her furniture to the house. It was emptier than not so they bought select pieces of new furniture. One of the first things he did was talk to my Dad about a whole beef and two hogs.

Dad checked with Clyde and me and butchered 8 hogs and 3 steers. This time around, he added some boneless to the beef and we had a near surplus of ground round. I wasn’t really paying attention because we were experiencing an increase number of calls at work. Many were domestic disturbances frequently arising from argument over money or the lack thereof. In the middle of the goings on, Lynne Evelyn DeSoto entered the world at 6 pounds 6 ounces. I ended up not getting to the hospital until my shift ended.

“Sorry sweetheart, it was a zoo. Met your former husband. At least that’s who he claimed he was. She quite a bit smaller than Josh, but she’s beautiful. Who brought you in?”

“Mom. I had an easier time too either because it was our second baby in a little over a year or because she was smaller.”

“Could have been a combination of both. We need to start spacing them out or we’ll have three in diapers.”

“Actually, Josh is making good progress. Another six months and he’ll be totally potty trained. He’s already in training pants.”

Despite my suggestion of spacing our children out, Anne said she wanted the birthing process out of the before she had gray hair. Three months later, she was pregnant again. Two months after that, the doctor determined we were expecting twins, a boy and a girl. That fact meant that we could find a use for Clyde and Diane as middle names. We picked out Robert Clyde and Rachael Diane.

With the Dow below \$9,000 and gold slightly over \$2,000 we and our folks had a significant amount of paper wealth. Horse sales were off because they were becoming a luxury but people still had to eat and the cattle and eggs were bringing a nearly

equivalent purchasing power for the ranch. Dad, who had never had much more than a cold or the flu that I knew of, had a heart attack. Mom called Anne and then 911. Anne called her Mom to watch the kids, loaded her trauma kit, a bottle of O₂ and headed for the ranch when her Mom arrived only minutes later. She put him on O₂, zapped him twice and restored a normal sinus rhythm.

She phoned the nearest ER he was likely to be transported to and explained that she was a current certified Paramedic with a trauma kit and detailed the steps she had taken. She then read off his vital stats and asked for instructions. The doctor hesitated a moment and asked what drugs she had available. She replied that he should make a suggestion and if she didn't have it, they could go from there, the drugs she had were current.

He asked if she could start an IV with Lactated Ringers and she said yes. While she was doing that, the ambulance and EMTs arrived. She told the doctor the IV was established and that the ambulance was there. The doctor suggested two drugs and they were administered as a bolus to the IV line. The EMTs took over and transferred Dad to the hospital.

Meanwhile, Mom had reached me and explained what happened and Anne's part in it. We were near the hospital Dad was being transported to and first break we had, I checked on him. They had him in Critical Care and he was doing better than expected. One of the ER doctors handed me a new bag of Ringers, an IV set and the two drugs he'd directed Anne to administer.

After Anne had stopped working, the task of keeping our drugs current fell to me. She'd give me the drugs nearing expiration and I'd swap them out the same as if they'd come from our drug box. It would have only been a problem if we had large quantities of IV drugs, which we didn't. As a Paramedic in Los Angeles, we'd seen a gradual reduction in the drugs we carried due to the hard times. Tucson wasn't to that point, yet.

Anne related the tale when I got home, just as I've related above. Ringer's helps combat acidosis and the doctor prescribed additional sodium bicarbonate and heparin as both were unaware that Mom had placed an aspirin under his tongue. When it was said and done, Dad had a minor calcium buildup that led to a subendocardial MI. They resolved his problem with a stent, various medications and prescribed a change in eating habits and lifestyle.

Dad was 64 and as hard headed as they come. He had a terrible time accepting the changes he needed to make but Mom pushed and he yielded. The effect his heart attack had on their lives was nearly as significant as it had on our lives. I spent every free moment at the ranch filling in for Dad helping the hired man tending to the stock.

Hay time was especially hard and Jimbo, the hired man, mowed and raked the hay by himself. Rather than pulling a wagon for the bales, he removed the bale chute from the baler and dropper the bales in the field. On weekends, Gunny, Jimbo and I gathered the

bales and stacked them on wagons. When the wagons were full, we pulled them back to the hay cover and unloaded and stacked them.

I had nearly run out of steam when the twins were born. Robert Clyde and Rachael Diane were only slightly smaller than Lynne and we actually did have three in diapers for a while. When it was time to market the steers, I set three aside and Mom and Dad, Evelyn and Clyde, Jimbo, his wife Marilyn and son Tom, Gunny and Rachael, Anne and I each took a side and the sixth side was divided up. Two dairy cows were added to the trimmings and extra ground round generated and evenly divided. I also bought 5 hogs and everyone got one. Those things that were in short supply, like hams and bacon, came from Costco or Sam's Club.

"Jon, I'd like you to consider giving up your job and take over the ranch. Since you'd inherit eventually, I'd like you to do it now. Hell, you're running yourself ragged. How much weight have you lost? You work 24 hour shifts for the TFD and then spent most of you off time over here."

"Can the ranch generate enough income for three families rather than two? You can't do much and that means that it would be Jimbo and me. Gunny might be able to help occasionally driving a tractor but that about it. By the way, Gunny and Rachael are expecting."

"Yes the ranch can support three families. We formed a family farm corporation just after you went into the Navy and every year since, we've gifted you stock and didn't say anything about it. When Anne and you got married, we were able to double the amount of stock each year. We set it up for 10,000 shares with a par value equal to one ten-thousandth of the value of the ranch at the time. The par value has never changed and you own about half the ranch as it stands. It cost more in taxes, but I never went with Subchapter S and we never paid dividends."

"I'd have to discuss this with Anne. I mean, I can do the work, have been since you had your heart attack. You'll stay here in your home? We managed to pay ours off by double paying the mortgage."

"Our home is part of the ranch and as such the utilities are just part of the corporate expense. The doctor classified me as disabled and I put in for Social Security Disability, which was approved, finally. It won't be long before we'll both qualify for regular Social Security. I did other work in addition to working on the ranch while your grandfather was still alive so I have 35 years of contributions. When we incorporated, I took a wage and continued to pay Social Security. Your mother is entitled to a benefit equal to half of mine."

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"... and that just the way the ranch set up. We have to make a decision, do I quit my job and become a fulltime rancher or do I keep trying to do both?"

“There’s no way you can continue to do both. Have you looked in a mirror lately? Eventually, your work on the ranch will affect the job you’re doing for the TFD if it hasn’t already. I say quit your job and take on ranching. Like your Dad said, you will eventually anyway.”

“Ok, I’ll talk to the Captain and Personnel and make it happen.”

I was fairly open with the Captain about my decision to quit so I could take over the family ranch. He said they hated to lose me but under the circumstances, it was probably the best decision. I submitted my two week notice to Personnel and maintained the double schedule for two more weeks. I had the maximum accumulated vacation and got that as part of my final check.

With the money in hand, I checked all of the tank levels and was surprised to find them full. Anne said Clyde had had their topped off and he did ours at the same time. We went grocery shopping and filled all the holes and I ordered a nominal amount of ammo to replace what we’d shot up. We were now sitting on 9 years of LTS with a 10th on order.

Gunny and Rachael came over to show off Anne Samantha, age two weeks. The fall weather was holding in the low 80s and the monsoon season was over. The humidity had fallen and it was fairly comfortable out.

“Oh she’s so cute. Are you planning on a large family?”

“George and I discussed it and we decided on a single child. I had a tubal ligation. I’m just too old and had a very difficult pregnancy. We decided if the baby was healthy, it would be our only child. The doctors checked her over carefully and she’s the picture of health.”

“We’re at our limit too. Four children in three years wore me out. I had a tubal too. You know that Jon resigned his job and will be ranching fulltime now don’t you?”

“No, I hadn’t heard.”

“It’s quite the story; let me fill you in...”

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“I never thought I’d see the day you gave up on medicine.”

“Well Gunny, Dad can’t work any longer and I do own half the ranch.”

“How’d that work?”

“When I went into the Navy, they formed a farm corporation and...”

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Gunny was in a good mood, he bought a six pack of Carling Black Label Supreme, the 8% brew. While strong, it isn't their best product and was hard to get. Our wives each had one bottle and we each had two. When they pulled in, I pulled steaks out of the freezer, but they begged off saying that they couldn't stay. I did explain to Gunny if he'd help just a little on the ranch, we'd keep them in beef, pork, chicken and eggs. He agreed with the suggestion.

Dad and Mom had the four horses they preferred to ride segregated along with the four Anne and I rode. I asked Jimbo to add their favorite horses to the bunch and also added four for Clyde and Evelyn and four for Gunny and Rachael. We went through the remainder of the horse flesh and selected the best mares and geldings and took what was left to the auction. They actually brought close to what we were asking and were bought by other ranchers for their remudas. (A remuda is a herd of horses tended to by a wrangler.)

Keeping horses is an expensive proposition. There is the occasional vet bill, but the greatest expense is keeping them shod. Jimbo was, among other things, a farrier and he shod at least 10 and sometimes 15 head a week. That was in addition to tending to the cattle, cutting, raking and baling hay and hauling the grain mix from the elevator and adding it to the grain silos (2).

Fortunately Dad had a ten ton truck with a tilt bed grain box making it relatively easy to dump the grain mix into the auger's hopper. The grain auger is used in agriculture to move grain from trucks and grain carts (wagons) into grain storage bins (silos) from where it is later removed by gravity chutes at the bottom. A grain auger may be powered by an electric motor; a tractor, through the power take-off; or sometimes an internal combustion engine mounted on the auger. The helical flighting rotates inside a long metal tube, moving the grain upwards. On the lower end, a hopper receives grain from the truck or grain cart. A chute on the upper end guides the grain into the destination location. We use the PTO on the Ford to drive the grain auger.

The truck could do double duty hauling livestock to the butcher. It was long in the tooth, but well cared for and had an old non-electronic diesel engine. Dad had a relatively new Containment Solutions 40,000 gallon diesel tank stabilized with PRI-D that was also plumbed to their 80kw standby generator. The 4V9 alternator generated 300 amps. Additionally, they had a 5,000 gallon gasoline tank stabilized with PRI-G and a pump that could deliver either product. He also had a 2,000 gallon kerosene tank, also dispensed from the pump, which stored the fuel for their kerosene heaters. I consider the kerosene heaters to superfluous because winter average temperatures in our area were never really that low.

The home on the ranch was an old 3 story with a basement. The 3rd story was the attic used to store odds and ends like Christmas decorations, etc. It wasn't case where discarded furniture and other things were stored. Mom's kerosene lamps were there, but they weren't used since the standby generator had been installed. Their firearms were stored in a large gun safe in the basement. Most of the firearms were family heirlooms, but Dad had his own set and favored Colt revolvers and Winchester rifles. He had acquired a full set of the lever actions during the late '70s and additional when Winchester looked like it was going to go belly up. The principal bolt action rifle he'd bought and used was a pre-64 Winchester model 70 in .30-06. They had a fair stock of ammunition, but it was all hunting ammo.

He must have thought that he'd someday have the opportunity to go hunting in Africa because, in addition to the .30-06, he had two model 70 Classic (controlled round feed) Safari Express; one in .375 H&H magnum and a second in .458 Winchester magnum. He had all four Legacy models, .30-30, .357, .45 Colt and .44 magnum. He had a pair of Legacy 9422s, LR and WMR, with Ruger revolvers to match. A late addition to his Winchester collection was a Traditional 9410 lever action .410 shotgun. Last, but not least, was his model 1300 Defender 8-shot pistol grip and full stock combo with an 18" barrel.

When I asked about the Winchesters, he said he bought most of them when the 2002 catalog came out. He had considered some of the others being offered but .38-55 ammo would probably be hard to find and he decided against it. And, when he bought the Winchesters, he went ahead and bought Rugers in matching calibers, a Bearcat for the 9422LR, a Single-Six convertible for the 9422WMR, a Blackhawk convertible for the .357 and a Super Blackhawk in .44 magnum.

Leather he said was relatively inexpensive Mexican hand tooled and he had a rig for each Ruger. The Colts on the other hand were carried in better leather, all from Kirkpatrick and single revolver rigs. The scabbards were also from Kirkpatrick. He half apologized that he hadn't bought four sets of each since he had four grandchildren, explaining that, at the time, he thought I was a confirmed bachelor. His favorite revolver/lever action combo was the Legacy model 94 in .45 Colt and his 7½" Colt SAA.

"And this is my carry gun. I know it's not much of a cartridge, but I like it."

He had drawn a Colt Detective Special from an IWB holster. He reached back and brought out a pair of speed loaders. I had to agree that the .38 Special wasn't much of a cartridge, but law enforcement had carried it for years and it was a whole lot better than a pocket knife. He showed me the cartridges he used, Speer Gold Dot +P.

"I don't use the Gold Dot for practice since it's +P and the jury is out on whether or not it's safe to use +P in the third series Detective Special. I only bought a single box and have fired six rounds of it. It's reserved to must use situations. In all the years I've carried, I've never had to draw my handgun much less shoot it so all but those six round

have been regular 158gr Winchester .38 Special round nose lead ammo. I don't know if you noticed, but I have most of a case of the Winchester."

When All Else Fails – Chapter 4

"I didn't notice that in particular but I did notice most of your ammo is hunting ammo."

"Most, but not all. I have 3" Brenneke Black Magic slugs, 3" 15 pellet 00 and 3" 41 pellet # 4 buck for the Defender. I use the no. 2, 4 and 6 shot in your grandfather's Winchester model 12."

"How much ammo do you have for the Defender?"

"Two cases each of the Brenneke and Remington #4 buck plus 8 cases of the Remington 15-pellet 00. I have a case each of the no. 2, 4 and 6 shot. I'm not much of a wing shot so those cases have never been opened. There are partial boxes of each of the shot sizes I used to pattern the gun. Oh, I have beanbag, rubber batons and FIOCCHI door breaching rounds. I carry a beanbag in the chamber with the first reload a baton followed by # 4 buck followed by 00 buck followed by a slug and then repeat with 00 and slugs, alternating. Don't want to get accused of not giving the bad guy a chance to give up."

"Door breaching rounds are expensive!"

"Yeah, \$4 a pop where I got them. But in hindsight, I shouldn't have bought the FIOCCHI and should have gone with the A.L.S. round. Anyway, I went back and bought 90 rounds of that. Weren't cheap, let me tell you; a shade over \$6 a round plus shipping from Texas."

"Ammunition to Go?"

"Yep."

"We tend to buy surplus from Aim or Ammoman and Ammunition to Go is our third choice. I'll have to ask Gunny if he has any door breaching rounds. If he doesn't, I take the FIOCCHI off your hands."

"Why don't you just take the A.L.S. rounds? I really doubt I'll need them and you'll get them eventually. My doctor said with the stent, medications and changes in diet and lifestyle, I could live another 20 years. I'll admit that since I've been following your mother's orders, I do feel better. I love her dearly, but when she's on a crusade, watch out. It's her way or the highway."

"You know, I wondered about something for over ten years and now is as good as time to ask as any. Did you buy the Tac-50 for yourself or for me?"

“I bought for myself. But it’s a heavy sucker and I decided to palm it off on you as a Christmas present. I already had the Jet suppressor on order and was waiting on the ATF. Anyway, I bought 8 more magazines and held onto them until I got the suppressor. Then after I gave those things to you I had the gunsmith make sure the suppressor worked as advertised and switched back to the muzzle brake.”

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Now I was a fulltime rancher. The actual workload wasn’t much less than when I’d been dividing my time between Paramedic and rancher but I had more free time and had a chance to become better acquainted with my family. The twins were growing like weeds and Rachael was potty trained, 95% of the time. Josh was just three and into everything.

Sometimes on a Sunday afternoon, we’d drop Rachael and the twins off at Clyde’s and take Josh riding. He rode in my saddle in front of me and hung onto the saddle horn for dear life. It was too early to teach him to ride, but I wanted him to get used to the idea of being on the back of the large animal. I had already selected a pair of 2 year old geldings for him and two yearling geldings for Rachael. There were all kinds of training to accomplish for our children and the horses before we turned them loose with each other.

As with many things, one has to learn to walk before learning to run. We had started the gunfire training using starter revolvers and we were just beginning to make progress with Joshua’s geldings. We had a .22 and a .32 and after those we’d use our regular revolvers with blanks. Josh’s geldings had their turn with the .22 and were doing well with the .32. We’d probably move up to a Blackhawk using .38 blanks and the Super Blackhawks with the .44 blanks.

We had the herd trimmed down to the size I wanted and began to increase the size of our cattle herd. As I said, the horse business was flagging for want of buyers. The price of meat was high and we considered and discarded the idea of raising hogs. I have to admit one of the principle reasons for that decision was that we were downwind, to the east.

The Dow was around \$8,500 and gold was up to nearly \$2,100. Silver seemed to be running about 46:1 when compared to gold prices, making an ounce of silver a few cents over \$45. A roll of junk silver dimes was worth about \$161 and a roll of quarters about \$322 per roll. Half dollars usually have 720 ounces per \$1,000 face and were worth about \$324 per roll

As the price of gold increased the relation between the minting cost, essentially fixed, and the cost of the coins dropped. Purchasing a tenth ounce gold piece was more costly than purchasing a one ounce coin due to the minting cost which was the same regardless of the amount of gold in the coin.

A tenth ounce gold coin might sell for \$218.78 while a one ounce coin might sell for \$1,946.80 for example. A large part of the difference between the \$2,187.80 and the \$1,946.80 was ten minting costs versus one minting cost and another portion of the cost was the dealer markup with was generally a fixed percentage and discounted slightly on large purchases, ergo, over 75 coins. The discount only applied to ¼, ½ and 1 ounce coins.

If we somehow ended up back on the gold and silver standards, it was going to be difficult to deal with the gold and silver Eagles and even harder to deal with junk silver. Put another way, a dime was worth \$3.22, a quarter worth \$8.05 and a half worth \$16.20. And, if God forbid, we were forced to rely on hard currency due to one Jerry's 137 disasters, it would get complicated. The economic meltdown was taking on the characteristics of a disaster but we hadn't heard the D word beyond speculation.

The worst part would come when someone got off their dead butt and admitted we were in a Depression. The Great Depression only ended because WW II. Unlike Einstein, I believed WW III would be a Global Thermonuclear War (GTW) and WW IV would be fought with small arms and crew served weapons. Like TOM and Jerry suggest, every nuclear nation would use their weapons subscribing to a policy of use it or lose it. As a result, we kept our pantry full and continued to add LTS as income permitted.

"Gunny, Jon. We could use some help picking up the bales again. Are Saturday and Sunday ok for you?"

"I'll be there."

"Would you happen to have any door breaching rounds?"

"How many do you want?"

"How many do you have?"

"Two cases at 250 rounds per."

"Can I get sixty?"

"They're packed in 25 round boxes, I'll give you three. How soon will you be butchering?"

"About a month. If you're short we have extra in our chest freezer. Just don't take all steaks."

"That ground beef they package for you is pretty good."

"It ground round, 12% fat."

“Ok if I send Rachael over tomorrow while we’re collecting the bales?”

“I’ll tell Anne to expect her. I’ll put in a call for 8 hogs. I’d like to smoke the picnics, hams and bacon and grind the rest into extra sausage. I assume we’ll still have to get hams and bacon from Costco. We also have a flock of chickens to butcher. After we get the hay put up, we decide when to start that. Anne will help. Do you think Rachael will?”

“She’s a farm girl the Ozarks; I can’t imagine why she wouldn’t. We can get Evelyn or your Mom to watch the kids.”

I decided to hold the bad news until we got started with the chickens. The flock of Cornish-Rock had grown to 250, allowing each of the five families to get 50 chickens. The Plymouth reds produced on average a little more than 43 dozen eggs a week. Marilyn had been gathering and washing the eggs for years.

Our wives hatched a get together for Saturday night, a late evening cookout after we had showered and changed. The steaks were thawed, the potatoes in the oven and the salad made. Gunny and I would cook the steaks on our propane grill. Anne had even ran in and picked up a special treat, a bottle of Jack Daniels Single Barrel.

“What’s the occasion?”

“Just a reward for the hard work you two did all day and because we love you.”

“Where’s the lobster?”

“What do you mean?”

“Filet mignon, Caesar salad, large baked potatoes and Single Barrel...the only thing missing is lobster.”

“Sorry, you’ll have to settle for the jumbo shrimp cocktail, see?”

“Shrimp nothing, those are prawns.”

“Fifteen count shrimp, do you think you can get around the meal?”

“The booze will stretch our stomachs; we just might be able to.”

Gunny and I got set up with some sippin’ whiskey on the rocks and visited while the grill heated. When we discovered the four of us all liked ‘perfect medium’ I got the nod and cooked all four filets. They ran about 12 ounces and that meant 7 minutes per side and let them rest. When they were ready, Anne brought out a heated plate and we dug into the salads and shrimp cocktails with a glass of Chardonnay. Round two was the steak and baked with a very good Merlot. I managed everything but a few scoops of potato.

“Can’t remember any meal I enjoyed more than that, thank you Ladies.”

“I’ll add a here, here to that,” Gunny added.

“You guys are just saying that so you can get in our pants.”

“Have to reward you somehow.”

“They sure have a high opinion of themselves Anne, don’t you agree?”

“Maybe they’re not totally wrong.”

It had been a long day and Gunny and I had another splash of the Single Barrel while our wives cleaned up the kitchen and started the dishwasher.

“This waif is ready for bed. Are you ready to go Rachael?”

“Did you finish or will there be more to do tomorrow?”

“A half day should see it finished.”

“Can we go shooting after?”

“Jon?”

“Sure, why not.”

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We started at sunrise and finished by 10:30. We headed home to clean up and get our firearms. Clyde and Evelyn were there when I got home asked if they could join us and Gunny and Rachael. They left to get their firearms and I got cleaned up. Gunny and I had decided we’d fire our ‘military’ weapons and that meant the Tac-50s, M-21s, SR-556s and Glocks. Our wives would fire their Hi-Powers and SR-556s. Clyde and Evelyn brought similar firearms.

Dad had built a 1,000 meter range years before with firing positions at different ranges varying from 25 to 1,000 meters. He’d built a berm against a fence line to the north that had nothing behind it for miles. It was the first thing you noticed when you got to the field because the berm was 20’ high and the range was fenced off from the pasture. It was about 30 meters wide, allowing a person to change a target at the berm and access any of the shooting positions. The actual shooting benches were staggered with the 1,000 meter bench on the left and the 25 mter on the right.

There were benches at 1,000, 500, 400, 300 and 200 meters for rifles and 50 and 25 meters plus 50' and 25' for pistol, a total of 9 lanes. Each lane was a shade over 3 meters wide. Each bench had a covered garbage can to dump spent brass into. Dad didn't reload and collected the brass for a year and took it to a friend that did. I had never learned reloading and Clyde said he didn't either. George, Gunny, did and said he either had the dies or would get them for all of the calibers.

One can well imagine how the shooting went. Gunny was top dog, I was second and Clyde was third among the men. Anne and Rachael tied for first place and Evelyn was third among the women. Dad and Mom came out to watch, but didn't shoot. After we finished, we collected the brass into one of the garbage cans and Gunny took it home to sort, clean and reload. He dumped the brass into some boxes and returned the can to the range.

"Jon, Gunny. I'm going sort the brass before bedtime. I'll run some through the case cleaner each night until it's all clean. I was thinking that we might want to reload the .50, 7.62 and 5.56 as match grade use A-MAX bullets. What do you think?"

"How close can you come to duplicating Hornady ballistics?"

"About 99.95%. You won't be able to tell the difference, I guarantee that."

"What's it going to cost?"

"That depends upon what I have to pay for the bullets. The primers and powder are a minor consideration when compared to the A-MAX bullets. I have the Hornady Reloading Manual and all of my equipment is Hornady. I've checked and there is a loading listed for every cartridge we use and the ballistics match the factory ballistics. As to the cost, it would probably run 25 to 50% of retail, if that. I checked Sportsman's Warehouse and they have the 750gr A-MAX bullets for about a buck each."

"Do it. It's a shame we don't have any of the Mk 211 bullets."

"The military doesn't reload their brass. However someone, like Winchester, loads the ammo for the military. Let me see what I can do. Someone also loads the M1022 and I'll add that to my to-do list."

"How long will it take you?"

"It's going to take some time. I have a wife and daughter that need attention and a job. You can figure 2 to 3 months."

"Ok, there was a lot of brass."

"That's true and only the foreign surplus was Berdan primed. I'll collect that and you can sell the brass to a scrap metal dealer."

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I assume that everyone involved in prepping had one or more Weather radios considering how inexpensive they were. We had several and we NEVER went anywhere without them. While they could announce incoming missiles, we used them for a more mundane purpose, weather information. It was nice to know that a sandstorm was on the way before you actually saw it.

Another thing that occurred to me was that I never actually said where we were in relation to Tucson. We were east a few miles with the Ranch being the first of our places and the closest to Tucson. It was possible that had the housing bubble not burst, we'd have been located in the middle of a major housing development. Burst, it did and those overpriced houses along this stretch of road were for sale, cheap. If I had accumulated more gold, I do believe I might have sold some and bought three more houses to give to our kids when they grew up.

Back in July or August of '11, China started to unload US debt and Argentina pulled its \$11 billion gold reserves from the Federal Reserve Bank in New York. They didn't take it home; they sent some to Russia and the balance to China. Either Hugo was a trusting soul or an idiot. Take your pick. I read an article related to his announcement that Hugo was a Cuban Communist aka in the mold of Fidel. I took it to mean at the time that he was a hot head. We sure didn't need to be reminded of that.

The article suggested that the bullion transfers were collateral for the loans made by China and Russia. It occurred to me that \$11 billion would buy a fair sized nuclear arsenal. And...there was no doubt that a Topol-M could reach the US from Venezuela. They had a 6,800 mile range and a payload of six MIRV'd warheads. Russia had begun replacing the Topol-M with the RS-24 Yars in 2010. Keep in mind that the Topol-M has a CEP of 200 meters.

I had been very busy in 2011 due to, among other things, the flu, recertifying, moving back home, meeting Anne, etc. About the only news I was following was the market collapse.

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Be that as it may, by 2014 I had completed the switch to cattle and only raised a few horses for use on the ranch. I'd kept mares and geldings and used an outside stud to service the mares. We stuck with quarter horse stallions but used more than one to get the best possible working horses. And we still worked the cattle with horses because the stretch of hay field we used was three miles long. When Jimbo's son Tom graduated from High School, we worked him on the ranch while he waited for the turn at farrier school.

At the moment, our group consisted of the five married couples and 6 children including Tom. Our shelter was large enough for the whole group and we had supplies for that many for a year counting what the others had. Even though Dad had shoved me into the position of Top Dog, it was difficult to get accustomed to the role. I quickly learned to ask Jimbo 'how they been doing it' if I wasn't sure how to proceed. I wasn't quite admitting I didn't know what to do; I was simply making certain I wasn't changing a well reasoned successful method already in place.

He probably saw though me like a pane of glass but eventually chucked about the hundredth time I asked. That said I'm sure he appreciated the fact that I didn't presume to 'know it all'. I'd been raised on that ranch until I joined the Navy and wasn't totally uninformed. But, it was a whole lot easier asking Jimbo than hunting down Dad and asking him. Frequently major decisions involved Dad, Jimbo and me. That was never more evident than when I wanted to reduce the horse operation in favor of increasing the cattle operation. Apparently they already discussed it and had reached the same conclusion I came to.

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Oh, I had a chance to validate carrying Grandpa's Colt and Winchester the other day. My horse shied nearly throwing me. The cause was a Mojave. It's good thing that they aren't an endangered species because there's one less now. Those .44-40 shot shells at 8' do a real number on them. The shot pattern opens about 1" per 1' travelled. As far as I know you can't buy .44-40 shot shells but they used to be manufactured and a good reloader, the one Dad used, made me two fifty round boxes using Pyrodex, a cardboard wad, 7½ shot and another cardboard wad held in place by crimping the case slightly and adding a tiny bead of bees wax. Commercially loaded .44-40 shot shells of the past had a wooden nose.

The next birthday, I received a VG used Winchester 94 in .45 Colt, a VG used Colt SAA 7½" with the transfer bar safety, several boxes of 250gr lead round nose and 100 rounds of commercial .45 Colt snake shot. Grandpa's .44-40s went back in Dad's gun safe.

That fall we had our first large sale of cattle, nearly double of years past and about 50% larger than the previous year. Beef was running \$1.65 and hogs were around \$1.05. We had a meeting and as a result, I added 45 sows. Yeah, I know what I said. I was out voted. Dad and Jimbo figured it like this: 45 sows times 2 litter's per year times an average of 12 pigs per litter equaled 1,080 market weight hogs. Market weight was 225 pounds and 1,070 hogs at 225 pounds at \$1.05 equaled almost \$253 thousand.

Add 100 head of cattle at 1,250 at \$1.65 equaled \$206 thousand. Maybe a dozen horses would bring the total farm receipts to a half million. The expenses weren't insignificant, but we grew our own grass and had that huge pasture we leased in addition to our regular pasture and we could restrict grain use to finishing in the dry lot.

We could clear half of the receipts, net. People have to eat and prices wouldn't be \$1.05 and \$1.65 if there were surpluses.

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Enough of the mundane daily goings on...we had several concerns. First and foremost was the weather. Summers were getting hotter and dryer and the amount of rain that fell during the Monsoon season was falling. Monsoon season starts mid-June through mid-July and can last to mid-August through mid-September. Average rainfall for the year, historically, ran about 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Currently it was averaging 10", a loss of almost 20%. We irrigated with well water and so did the company that owned the land we leased meaning we were less affected.

Anyway, on Labor Day, post Monsoon this year, we had a picnic and invited everyone. Baby back ribs were slow cooking on racks on a slow grill, hamburgers and hot dogs in the refrigerator wait to be cooked, a big pot of pinto beans season with onion and garlic were warm on the stove, French fries were waiting to be cooked and two cases of MGD were iced down along with an assortment of soft drinks. Gunny, Rachael and Anne were the first three to show up.

"Beer?"

"I guess so."

"You look down in the mouth."

"I lost my delivery job. It's a good thing we've been putting all of my retirement in hard currency. It was risky, the bottom could always fall out of the pm market, but I doubted it. Hey, before we open that beer, let's transfer the latest batch of reloads. I test fired it all and it matches Hornady right down the line. The .50 caliber cost around \$2 a round to reload. It shot less than $\frac{1}{2}$ MOA at 1,000 meters and grouped tight."

We moved the ammo to the shelter and returned to the backyard.

"Could I have a shot to go with the MGD?"

"I'll join you, but only one and it won't be the Single Barrel."

"Yeah but, even your cheap whiskey is Jack Black."

I was just setting the shot glasses on the picnic table when my weather radio sounded an alarm.

"Now what?"

Stand by for an all stations announcement from the head of the US Geological Survey.

This is a preliminary warning announcement. As of 2pm EDT, the warning level for Yellowstone Caldera has been raised from Normal to Advisory. Yellowstone Observatory reports that the Caldera is exhibiting signs of elevated unrest above the known background level. Accordingly, the aviation Color Code has been raised from Green to Yellow.

One or more volcano monitoring parameters are outside the background range of activity. Progression towards an eruption is by no means certain. In view of the possible ramifications of an eruption, notification is being made at this time to allow the public to make necessary preparations.

“Necessary preparations...yeah right. Like there are enough food supplies in the stores to provide everyone with enough food to wait out an ashfall of that magnitude.

“I don’t know Jon; they’ve never issued an alert before when they were experiencing seismic swarms. There has to be more to it than just that.”

“Either way, we’re about as prepared as a group of people could be. In all the years we’ve had the SAME radios, this is the first time I recall hearing any kind of national warning. Of the four eruptions, three did send ash all the way south past the Mexican border. That little one, Mesa Fall, I think, didn’t.”

“How do you know?”

“We had to attend a one day class on Volcano Hazards when I was with the LAFD. Don’t worry about it; we have several cases of the 3M N-100 masks and 24 sets of goggles. Plus we have a few cases of the Healthcare Particulate Respirators in regular and small. A person shouldn’t preparation for just one particular emergency but all of the possibilities. I guess I should have bought more equipment from Approved Gas Masks. Think we should drive over there tomorrow and fill in any holes?”

“Where are they?”

“San Diego. It’s not that long of a drive and it’s Interstate all the way.”

“Ok, first thing in the morning. I need to get a Baby Safe for Anne. What about the 3M filters?”

“We have more than enough of those. Like I said, these are the long lasting heavy duty filters. I should pick up a second Baby Safe. One thing, California won’t honor our CCWs so we’ll have to lock our handguns in the gun case under the back seat.”

“Under the back seat?”

When All Else Fails – Chapter 5

“Well...I needed something better than a window rifle rack so I got a mechanic to hinge the seat and install a lockbox in the space underneath. It will hold the SR-556s, shotguns and handguns plus a fair number of magazines and boxes of spare ammo.”

“I’m surprised you didn’t trick you pickup out with a bunch of spare tires, brush guards and all those things you read about in the PAW fiction stories.”

“I thought about it, but the only thing I did do was add the front hitch receptacle so I can use the Warn Winch on either end. I copied what you did with the winch and did add the 98 gallon cross bed diesel tank, but that’s it.”

About then people began to arrive and the main topic of discussion was the warning about Yellowstone. There wasn’t a consensus about what the announcement meant. I pointed out the Gunny and I were probably driving to San Diego the next day to Approved Gas Masks for Baby Safes and anything that struck our fancy.

That announcement brought an immediate reaction from Rachael and Anne, questioning if we really wanted to be that far from home if Yellowstone did erupt. I pointed out that it was a one day trip there and back. The only variable was our return time which depended on locating their warehouse and however long it took them to fill our order. I had the waybill from a previous shipment showing their shipping address, not the P.O. Box shown on their website. The firm isn’t listed in the San Diego white pages.

The ribs went over well as did the potato and macaroni salads. The macaroni salad included thinly sliced green peppers, green onions, celery, sliced black olives, pimentos and 2# of macaroni. The potato salad was an old recipe which included diced potato, diced onion, diced eggs, celery seed as opposed to diced celery and Miracle Whip rather than mayonnaise. Mayonnaise is oil, egg yolks and a tiny bit of mustard while Miracle whip didn’t contain eggs. Since the potato salad already had eggs, why add more? There were also deviled eggs, an infrequent treat.

There was beer left over because most of the wives drank diet soft drinks, primarily Coke Zero. And every one of the men wanted to just keep their wits about them, just in case. Everyone took home some of the leftover salads and the picnic broke up well before dark. I helped Jimbo and Tom with feeding the livestock and went back home.

“Make me a Daiquiri?”

“Up or frozen?”

“Frozen.”

“Standard or exotic?”

“Standard.”

I added ice to the blender and measured the rum, lime juice and syrup (9:4:1). I rinsed the glass out with cold water and stopped the blender. It wasn't quite ready so I stirred and blended some more. This time it was ready and I poured and served.

“I think I'm going to have some of that Single Barrel on the rocks.”

“Are you still working on that bottle I bought you?”

“It's too expensive to waste.”

“Don't worry about it, I went shopping. I bought you two cases of Jack Black and a case of Single Barrel. While I was at it, I got a mixed case of white and dark rum, half case of each Cuervo 1800 and Sapphire Gin, half case each of Chivas Regal and Maker's Mark. The last case was mostly liqueurs, Grand Marnier, etc. Oh, I bought the Jose Cuervo Margarita mix. I know you don't use it, but I can't make them from scratch.”

“It's not that complicated, 7 parts 1800, 4 parts Grand Mariner and 3 parts lime juice. They're better if you add an extra jigger of 1800.”

“What does that do to the ratio?”

“Makes it 9 parts 1800.”

“Do you really have to go to San Diego tomorrow?”

“Is that what this is all about? Yes, we have to go to San Diego, just in case. We only have one Baby Safe. We need four Child Safes and 3 more Baby Safes. Think about it, Joshua can still use the Baby Safe, meaning Lynne, Robert and Rachael will need one too. Depending upon when whatever happens, we could need four of the Child Safes and I plan to pick up more of the CBRN filters while I'm at it. We don't have any chemical test strips and I intend to remedy that.”

“Just don't take any guns with you.”

“We're both taking SR-556s, shotguns and our Glocks. That's why I have that hidden gun safe under the back seat. It has an electrically operated lock, I showed you the switch.”

“I can't believe you turned the cigarette lighter into a switch.”

“I did that before I resumed smoking. I should try to quit again, but it's relaxing and ranching is more stressful than being a Paramedic. Do you have any idea how many I'm responsible for or to?”

“Tough, huh?”

“You have no idea. If Dad continues to take good care, he’ll live a long time. By then, he’ll have gifted most of the corporate stock to us and avoid any inheritance tax. We should begin doing the same when our four are in their teens. I was thinking just the other day that it was a shame we didn’t have more gold. We could sell some and buy three additional houses. When Mom and Dad are gone, we could move into the Ranch house and each of our four could have a home of their own.”

“That might not be a bad idea. How many homes between our and the Ranch are empty?”

“All but two, your parents place and Gunny and Rachael’s.”

“Maybe you should talk to whoever holds the mortgages and negotiate a package price.”

“Maybe, but that’s a lot of property taxes.”

“Yes, but they’re deductible. You could get some really good renters and recover the costs. For that matter, why doesn’t the corporation buy them?”

“We may be the majority shareholder, but I would want to shove that down Dad and Mom’s throats.”

“Don’t, just ask.”

“I’ll think about it on the trip tomorrow.”

“You drive very carefully, I starting to like you.”

“Is that an invitation?”

“Got something in mind sailor?”

“Besides sailing, you bet.”

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Gunny and I left the next morning with our firearms stored under the back seat, a pocketful of money each and a street address in San Diego. We took I-10 north to I-8 and I-8 west to San Diego, a trip of 5½ hours. We filling up the tank, got a local map and found a McDonalds choke and puke so we could wolf down a double cheeseburger, fries and a coke. I’m telling you not all McDonalds are bad, but that particular restaurant was the pits.

We finally found the street we were looking for and headed out to get there. Of course we were in the 1000 block and we needed to be in the 9000 block but we crawled through traffic until we got there. It gets better...AGMs website was in Maryland and served three locations, including San Diego. This was a warehouse, not a retail location, but...everybody can recognize a bundle of cash when you waive it under their nose and explain you only want a few things like 3 Baby Safes and 4 Child Safes plus eight cases of Millennium CBRN filters. Gunny had his own list, a Baby Safe, a Child Safe and two cases of Millennium CBRN filters.

The Baby Safe sells for \$290, the Child Safe for \$290 and a 3 pack of the filters, 2 packs to the case for \$140 and \$280 respectively. My purchase was ~\$4,270 plus sales tax and Gunny's purchase was ~\$1,700 plus sales tax. And yes, they accepted cash and cash only. Credit card purchases were only accepted on the website. They piled it up, we handed over the cash and put the things in the rear foot well, keeping the backseat clear.

About halfway home I remembered I planned to buy chemical test strips so I called Anne and told her I forgot and to order them from the website. We stopped in Yuma at a halfway decent eatery and were home around 7pm. Sometimes it's hard to pick up radio stations out in the desert and I didn't have the pickup radio on. Between the time I called Anne and we got home, the USGS had upped the level a notch to Watch indicating that Yellowstone was exhibiting heightened or escalating unrest with increased potential of eruption, timeframe uncertain.

"They began evacuations when they announced the Watch condition. I wonder if the people can get out of the way in time."

"I'm wondering if we can get out of the way in time."

"What do you mean?"

"We have about 40 head of horses, over 100 of cattle and 40 sows about halfway through their gestation period. I'm not certain we have enough space to house all of the livestock. I'm going to call Dad."

"Dad, Jon. Have you heard about them raising the level to Watch for Yellowstone? Oh, you have. Well, look, 3 of the last four eruptions...no, I'm including Long Valley, have dumped ash on this area. I'm think we might be short of space to house the livestock. You did? When, today? How big? Yes, that should house the cattle. When will it be done? No, I didn't notice the lights, I'll be right over."

"Give."

"Dad ordered the immediate round the clock construction of a one level pole building with 12' sides and reinforced 1:1 pitch roof. He's having them install watering lines to

keep the ash washed off the roofs, continuously. I'm going to drive over and check it out. I'll fill you in when I get back."

"Man, they really coming along. How much longer do you think?"

"They said by sunup. For what they're charging it had damn well better be by sunup. There will be feed bunks along the outside walls and water troughs along the ends. We have more than enough room in the barn for the horses and those stinking hogs."

"They may stink but they generate more money than the cattle. We'll be selling over 1,000 of 225 pound hogs at \$1.05 compared to 100 head of 1,250 pound cattle at \$1.65 a pound. Before this lasted thing came up, I was going to discuss a proposition with you, but it had better wait."

"Can't you give me a hint?"

"Most of the houses between the Ranch and where we are empty. Anne and I discussed briefly trying to get a package deal on three of them so your grandchildren would have their own homes when they grow up."

"Financed by the corporation?"

"That was the general idea."

"Let's get the livestock situation squared away first and we'll give it some thought."

"Fair enough."

"How was the trip?"

"Long and boring. Got everything I wanted except chemical test strips. When I realized it I called Anne and asked her to order them on line."

"What are they for?"

"War gases."

"You're really into this survivalist thing."

"Prepping. The main stream media has made survivalist a hate term."

"A rose by any other name..."

"It's just that they associate survivalist with militias planning on overthrowing the government."

“And you wouldn’t if things got bad enough?”

“I didn’t say that. *I hold it, that a little rebellion, now and then, is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical.*

“And, *God forbid we should ever be twenty years without such a rebellion. The people cannot be all, and always, well informed. The part which is wrong will be discontented, in proportion to the importance of the facts they misconceive. If they remain quiet under such misconceptions, it is lethargy, the forerunner of death to the public liberty. ... What country before ever existed a century and half without a rebellion? And what country can preserve its liberties if their rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms. The remedy is to set them right as to facts, pardon and pacify them. What signify a few lives lost in a century or two? The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure.*”

“Thomas Jefferson?”

“Him and 200 years later Ronald Reagan.”

“My favorite was Harry Truman.”

“Anyone you didn’t like? I’d better get going, it was a long day.”

“I didn’t care for Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. I did like JFK and Gerald Ford. The Bushes I’m still thinking about. They had about as many good points as bad and I’d call them in-betweens.”

“See you tomorrow.”

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“The pole building they’re putting up is 60’ wide by 120’ long with a 45° roof pitch. Dad said it would be done by sunup. I mentioned buying three houses and he said he think it over after the building was completed. I’m going to shower and hit the hay. We can sort out what we bought tomorrow.”

“If it did erupt, would it be bad?”

“Probably not much worse than a severe sandstorm and it would depend on the volume of ash, wind direction and several other things.”

“There’s a low pressure system stall over the Rocky Mountains.”

“Not good, low pressure areas generate winds rotating counterclockwise in the northern hemisphere. If it is pushed east by a high pressure system, those winds would rotate

clockwise. The effect of a low followed by a high would direct a large volume of ash our direction. At least that's what I expect might happen."

"The pole building...is it large enough? And, won't the dust get in?"

"If it isn't large enough, any overflow will fit in the barn. From what I could see, they were installing some kind of ventilation system and it might well be over pressurized to keep the dust out."

"Well, ok."

I showered and crawled into bed. I believe I was asleep before my head hit the pillow. I awoke at my usual time 5am, in our bed, so apparently Yellowstone hadn't erupted. I started coffee and turned on the radio to catch some early morning news. The USGS had shifted the level back to Advisory. However, evacuations were continuing and the FAA continued to require aircraft to reroute around the area. I wasn't really hungry and made two slices of toast covered in peanut butter.

After I finished my coffee and toast, I began to unload our things from the pickup and transfer them to the shelter. We had four sets extra masks, acquired three or six at a time when our children were born. There was one each small, medium and large mask with ESP II voice transmitters, one per mask. There were also spare outserts, the most likely part to be damaged. It was just one of the myriad of expenses pertaining to the birth and growth of a child.

When I had everything unloaded, I drove over the Ranch. The building was completed and electricians were installing light fixtures. It was much as I'd thought sealed up tight with an accessible above ground air filtration system. Carpenters were completing the feeding troughs and plumbers were installing the float valves on the water tanks.

"Something to behold, isn't it?"

"Good morning Jimbo. Yes it is. I called Dad when we got home last night and came over for a looksee. They reversed the level back from Warning to Advisory."

"They'll change it back. According mainstream media, the Warning was hampering rather than aiding the evacuation. I listened to my ham receiver last night and it's more of a pause than a reduction in activity."

"So, it really could blow?"

"Anything is possible to paraphrase Spock."

"What's on our plate today?"

“Turning the alfalfa. Tom will do that. We’ll probably bale tomorrow. As soon as they get that pole building finished, we’ll start transferring hay to the loft. A guy is coming by later to add additional grain augers to deliver grain to the building. It will be 100% by tonight. You know if Gunny was available, we could put the chute back on the baler and put the hay up in one fell swoop. Gunny could drive the tractor pulling the baler, Tom could stack the wagon, you could haul the hay and I’d help you unload and stack. It would really cut the time.”

“Gunny is unemployed. I imagine he could use the work. I’ll work it out. How are we on grain?”

“One silo is full and the other nearly empty. I put in a call and the elevator is mixing the grain and will deliver it, for a fee. I’ll put Marilyn on the Ford when they start arriving later today.”

“We have a problem.”

“What?”

“Two tractors and three tasks.”

“You have a 2” hitch on the back of your pickup don’t you? I’ll slip in a wagon hitch, no problem.”

“A wagon hitch?”

“We sometimes needed more than two tractors with one of them doing nothing but pulling loads. They’re just ball mounts without the ball with a hole large enough to take the standard locking hitch pin.”

Note: a locking hitch pin has a hinged flap at the bottom that is held into the body of the pin when inserted in the hole and drops back out when the pin is fully inserted. To remove the pin, the flap is held in its slot as the pin is pulled. There are probably as many variations in design and names as there are manufacturers. Three point hitches allowed for a steel drawbar between the two raising/lowering arms. The drawbar was flat steel bar with multiple holes. Traveling over rough ground could sometimes cause the pin to bounce out thus the need for a ‘locking hitch pin’. Ours were made by Wilson Manufacturing and called ‘Tension Lock Pins’.

By evening, the pole barn was completed and the livestock were moved to the dry lots. Jimbo said if we started as soon as the hay allowed, there was a good chance we could get most of it baled and stacked the next day. As dry as it is in this area, I figured we could start at sunup and work until we had it all baled. I stopped by Gunny’s on the way home and he agreed to pull the baler but cautioned me he’d never done it before. I told him to just keep the hay centered in the baler pickup and it would work out fine.

“They raised the level back up to Watch.”

“Jimbo told me he listened to some of the Hams on his receiver and they were claiming that it was a pause in activity not a reduction. We’re going to bale hay tomorrow and I could be late because we’re going until it’s done and put up. I put the new things in the shelter.”

“I was surprised, but they delivered those chemical test papers this afternoon.”

“We may never need them, but you know the old saying.”

“We have them whether we need them or not. Gold broke \$2,300 today, ending at \$2,345. Silver was the real gainer, stopping at \$54.25.”

“A roll of junk silver dimes is almost \$200? Wow! Damn, I forgot to take my weather radio today.”

“Could you kind of watch the language? Josh hasn’t picked it up, yet. I don’t want to deal with him cussing.”

“Ok, sorry. Do I really cuss that much?”

“You have your moments.”

“I’ll watch it. What cooking?”

“I have a meatloaf and baked. I have salad or a vegetable.”

“You choose. Whatever is easiest?”

“Salad. You have time to shower, it will be 20 minutes.”

“Umm, smells good.”

“Eat but don’t get too comfortable, they raised the level to Warning while you were in the shower. It hasn’t erupted but is considered imminent.”

“I need to make some calls, five minutes. Jimbo, Jon. It’s imminent, we need to bale tonight. You did, great. Gunny, Jon. It’s imminent, we need to bale tonight. Ok, I’ll pick you up on the way.”

“Sorry, we’ll be working all night. Pass the ketchup, please.”

I drowned my salad in Thousand Island and put the ketchup on the side. I tried not to rush, the meal was really good. But. It would probably take all or most of 24 hours to bale the hay with only a few breaks.

“I’m on my way. I’ll see you when we’re done.”

“Be careful, I don’t like you working around machinery in the dark.”

“We’ll all be especially careful. The elevator is continuing to mix and deliver the grain. Marilyn has been at it since about 9am. They’ll have to work all night and part of tomorrow to fill the silo.”

“Rachael and I can help. Mom will watch the kids and there has to be something we can do.”

“How about Rachael bringing Anne here and you keep us fed and watered?”

“I can do that.”

She did do that. She also spelled Marilyn on the Ford so she could go to the bathroom and bet a bite to eat. The hay was plenty dry and we had three wagons available. So, she also helped hauling the empty wagons back and bringing in full wagons. Rachael got Evelyn to watch the kids and she picked up where Anne had left off providing us with sandwiches and beverages. I don’t believe seven people ever worked any harder for 26 straight hours, but the hay was stacked and the silo full.

We were just about ready head home when the ground shook so hard none of us could stand. After the shaking stopped, the sounds an enormous explosion reached us and the shaking resumed at a reduced level.

“I think that’s it. Ok, Anne get Mom and Dad, and your Dad on the way home. We’ll get the livestock inside and lock down. We’ll be there as soon as possible. There’s no need to scramble, it will take a while to reach us. Make sure everyone has any medicines they need and if necessary, either get refills or call in some favors from folks we know at the hospitals. You might as well get milk on the way home and anything else we may need.”

“I’ve got it covered. Love you.”

“And I you. Jimbo, you ready?”

“There’s room in your shelter for us?”

“Of course. Marilyn can run over as soon as she’s ready. We’ll need Tom’s help for a while.”

“Jon, your Mom insists on loading her home canned goods. They’re boxed.”

When All Else Fails – Chapter 6

“Fill the bed of the pickup and take off. The rest can go in the Suburban since it’s here. You’d better get those errands run ASAP. Just unload the pickup and stack the boxes for now.”

Here’s something to think about. The heading from Jackson, Wyoming to Tucson, Arizona is 180.6° , due south. The distance from Jackson, Wyoming to Tucson, Arizona is 778 miles (1252 km) (676 nautical miles). We had the backside winds from a stalled Low and the frontside winds from a stalled High. The average wind speed was 15mph gusting to 20mph. Assuming 15mph the ash would reach us in ~52 hours at the latest and assuming 20mph ~39 hours at the earliest.

No reporter in his or her right mind would be taping any of this so we were watching satellite feeds on TV. From what we could see, almost the entire amount of ash was initially being fed to the south. About 24 hours after the eruption, the Low finally started moving to the east and the High followed, moving the ash in a more easterly direction.

Since the livestock, cattle primarily, weren’t accustomed to being in a barn for long periods, we went back to the Ranch. The automatic feeding systems were working as advertised, for the grain. The hay was strictly a hand operation, dropping the bales from the loft, moving the bales to the hay chutes, cutting the twine and putting the hay into the chutes.

We did the cattle first and then moved the sitting hens to the barn, nest and all. They settled down once we put out a little grain. We checked the sows and none was in distress so we added one bale of hay to their pen. Hogs will eat anything; even people according to John Ross. The hardest to feed properly were the horses. They prefer to eat a little continuously.

The feeding done, we got the wheelbarrows and shovels and gather the horse and hog manure, finally returning to the pole barn where most of the cattle were at the feed and water troughs. We scooped the manure and added it to the pile. After one last check, we headed home.

We repeated the process the second time at 24 hours, about the time the Low began to move and again at 36 hours.

“Someone is going to have to stay with the livestock Jon. I can do it.”

“I appreciate that Jimbo, I do. However, it’s my responsibility. I’ll do it and you can spell me when the ash is down enough for you to make the trip.”

“You’re the boss. But, the ash isn’t here yet, so let’s maintain the 12 hour schedule until we see the first sign of the ash.”

“Fair enough. Anne, can you tell from the satellite feed where the ash is?”

“It looks like the upper reaches of Lake Powell. I can’t be more specific than that.”

“Sounds like we’ll have a chance to all go over and do the chores at least once before we switch to Plan B.”

“Is that what you call it?”

“I’ve probably read too much PAW fiction. Most the characters have a Plan A and Plan B at the minimum and some have a Plan C for when all else fails.”

“You shouldn’t be doing it alone. What if you get kicked by one of the animals or something?”

“Ok, so much for Plan A. Gunny, will you go with me?”

“To do what?”

“Plan B. Two of us take care of the livestock until the ash clears enough for Jimbo and Tom to relieve us.”

“Fair enough, but I’m going to pack my hardware.”

“Why?”

“A lot of people in Tucson know about the Ranch. Somebody might get an urge for a steak. The world is filled with idiots and one of them might get lucky and end up at the Ranch. It’s better to be safe than sorry.”

“My, aren’t we slinging the clichés?”

“Call it what you want Navy, I’m packing my hardware since it really is better being safe than sorry. I figured on the SR-556, M-21, 590A1 and my Glocks.”

“Which sights on the M-21?”

“The scope and MUNS are mounted and I’ll bring my TA01B ACOG.”

“I didn’t know you had one. Got an extra?”

“Complete with A.R.M.S. Throw Lever mount. It’s sighted in on my rifle so you’ll have to adjust it for yours.”

“We’ll do that next trip.”

“Yeah, well, I have to stop and pick it up. It’s my spare and I got it cheap, a bottle of 1800.”

“I’m surprised you didn’t get Rachael an M-21.”

“I planned to. I let her shoot mine and she said she could get used to the recoil but didn’t really like it. I guy I know in town who had a SR-556 in 6.8 SPC and he let her try it. I think she fell in love with it the first trigger pull. So I immediately got her the same carbine. The funny thing was she took to the 590A1 right off. But I had her shooting some low recoil shells. The Hi-Power fit her hand really well and it was like the SR-556, love at first sight. The nice thing about the SPX is that it provided her with the bayonet and she’s using that as her knife. I’m not sure many people have a bayonet as sharp as hers, besides me.”

“You taught me to sharpen knives jarhead and ours probably match yours. Both my Laredo Bowie and her Recon Tanto are sharp enough to shave with. But, I prefer my safety razor. What did your first ACOG cost you?”

“A bottle of Single Barrel. Rachael’s I had to pay for, but I got it at cost. It’s 4X and has readings to 800 meters. I offered to get her a scope and she said she didn’t need or want one, the 4X was enough.”

“That’s one of things I don’t like about the MUNS, you have to crank down your scope to 20X or less.”

“You may shoot like a sniper, but you sure ain’t one. I guess it don’t much matter, though, you can cover my back anytime. Never thought I’d see the day where Doc was covering my back.”

“I covered your back every time you forgot to duck.”

“Yeah you did. Good thing we didn’t see much combat while you were the Doc. We went through a couple of good ones in Iraq and Afghanistan. No CMHs, just Navy Crosses.”

“Posthumously?”

“One. The other lost an arm from the shoulder down. They don’t just hand out the Navy Cross, you really have to earn one. Or, get lucky like Duke Cunningham.”

“He served his time here in Tucson in minimum security.”

“You don’t say. Took a wrong turn somewhere and paid big time, he did. That author you mentioned a couple of times...would he call this event number one?”

"I didn't know at first if you meant TOM or Jerry. TOM claims bad things happen in threes. I think he'd call this number two."

"Really, what was number one? Did I sleep through it or something?"

"Not at all, you've been living it. I think the well-drawn out economic meltdown would constitute number one. Be thankful, that means there's only one more to go."

"Do you believe that?" (Of course I do...)

"If we had come out of the meltdown, I might have cause to doubt it. We're still melting down and about a step from another Great Depression. This eruption will only make things worse. If you read his stories, you'd realize that one isn't totally over before the next begins. That's where he gets his linkage, I think. Jerry picked up the theme in *3 Time Jinx*. I'm not saying that it has to happen...it's just that when you have two, how far off is number three? It will be years before we're over number one and number two."

"Think we should take some grenades?"

"No, we don't need any grenades, this time."

"Are you taking your SR-556 in 6.8 SPC?"

"Yes, what about it?"

"It has the M-203 mounted. You'd better take some 40mm grenades, I am."

"I thought Rachael's SR-556 was 6.8 SPC."

"It is. I got jealous and bought another to mount my M-203 on, so sue me."

"I guess that means I'll have to buy Anne a PPK."

"Why?"

"So she has a backup, like Rachael."

"Don't bother; I've got one that I'll sell you. It's new in the box. I got a pair of them once and just held on to them, they just keep appreciating in value. I still have the sales invoice and you can divide by two. I got 4 extra magazines for each pistol. I did fire five rounds just to function check it. Got 'em in Germany, they're the genuine article."

"What about ammo?"

"Bought that separate, 90gr Gold Dot and 95gr Lawman FMJ. I have a bunch, but be aware that 20 rounds of Gold Dot cost about the same as 50 rounds of Lawman."

“Can we pick it up when I get the ACOG?”

“No problem.”

“What are the two of you scheming?”

“Well, I trade Gunny a bottle of 1800 for an ACOG for my M-21 and am buying you a Walther PPK like Rachael's. Sorry, it's slightly used; Gunny test fired 5 rounds through it.”

“Used? Do you get a discount?”

“Gunny?”

“Sorry. But I bought it really cheap. Probably half the price of one these days.”

“What the status on the Ash?”

“It's into northern Arizona. Tomorrow will be when you implement Plan B.”

“You overheard?”

“Yes. We need to get some sleep.”

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Well, there is getting some sleep and sleeping and we did a little of both. We rolled out of bed at 5am and I showered and shaved because who knew when we'd have a chance again? I packed 2 changes of underwear, one change of outer ware and plenty of socks. I added my shaving kit with tooth brush and paste, comb, razor, extra blades and a can of Edge. I had it in mind that we might try to stay in the house after we roped the house to the pole barn and the pole barn to the old barn.

Next, I got my six-cell MagLite, 48 extra D batteries and two bulbs plus a lantern and 4 extra 6 volt batteries and two extra bulbs. Finally, I loaded my firearms onto the backseat including 12 M433 40mm grenades. I loaded my empty 6.8 SPC magazines and 400 rounds 6.8 SPC Hornady. I had the full assortment of shotgun rounds, Gold Dot for my Glocks and 168gr A-MAX for my M-21. I grabbed a battle pack of DAG while I was at it.

Gunny was doing essentially the same as I was except he'd pick up his clothes when we stopped by their place on the way. I suggested that Anne follow us to Gunny's so she could pick up her new Walther and ammo and Rachael pointed out that she needed clothes for herself and Anne.

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Before this gets more confusing, Anne is my wife and also the name of Gunny (George) and Rachael's daughter Anne Samantha Burns. Our children are named Joshua Harry, Lynne Evelyn, Robert Clyde and Rachael Diane. My father is Harry and my mother Diane. Anne's father is Clyde and her mother Evelyn. Oh, and my name is Jon (NMI) DeSoto. I notice that I didn't tell you Anne's maiden name, Christopher.

Ok, on with the tale...

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"Do you have enough rope to string between the house, pole building and barn?"

"We buy CMC Rescue Static-Pro Lifeline 7/16 Inch Rope in the Red-White color in 200ft Lengths. We had several coils. The stuff we use for lariats is a $\frac{3}{8}$ " stiff rope."

"What are we going to do for comms?"

"Use Dad's base station unless we lose power. If we do, we'll switch to his mobile with a pair of charged 820 amp deep cycle batteries. Plan C, should it get to that, is use the CB in my pickup."

"What's plan D?"

"Three per customer. Actually Dad has an 80kw backup generator and 40 thousand gallons of stabilized diesel. We really won't need Plan B, let alone Plan C. It wouldn't do to have automated systems without power to operate them."

"It's a shame he doesn't have an automated manure system."

"Ok. Ok. I do the hogs."

"Thanks."

"Do you remember pictures of Yakima and Spokane when Mt. St. Helen's erupted?"

"I was overseas."

"I saw it on TV, strong high-altitude wind carried much of this material east-northeasterly from the volcano at an average speed of about 60 mph (100 km/h). By 9:45 am it had reached Yakima 90 miles (145 km) away, and by 11:45 am it was over Spokane. A total of 4 to 5 inches (100 to 130 mm) of ash fell on Yakima, and areas as far east as Spokane were plunged into darkness by noon where visibility was reduced to 10 feet (3 m) and half an inch (13 mm) of ash fell. Continuing east, St. Helens' ash fell in the

western part of Yellowstone by 10:15 pm and was seen on the ground in Denver, the next day.

“I know we’re much further, but the amount of ash ejected by Mt. St. Helen’s was a drop in the bucket in comparison to what Yellowstone is capable of. Anne said the ash was in northern Arizona and Mesa Falls never reached Arizona. Although Lava Creek was the most widespread, it was less than half the volume of Huckleberry Ridge. I wish I knew more about the subject, but until we get some reports for the USGS or MSM, we’re pretty much operating on the dark.”

“Jon, got you ears on?”

“Go Anne.”

“I have an update from the USGS. They expect the Caldera to continue ejecting ash for 10 days to two weeks. They’re speculating that the ash volume will approach or exceed Lava Creek.”

“Copy all. Everything ok there?”

“We got Rachael, Anne’s and Gunny’s things and made it back ok. I called and made arrangement on the medications and am leaving now. Rachael is going with me and we’ll pick up milk and whatever fresh bread and buns available. Do you think we can risk the time to go to Costco to get more coffee and a few other things?”

“As long as you don’t cut it too close. Where’s the ash?”

“East of Phoenix and some is spreading into eastern Phoenix. It was just entering Apache Junction the last I heard.”

“Ok, just manage you time.”

“10-4.”

“Do you want to string the ropes first?”

“Good idea. The coils are in the machine shed. Grab one coil, a hammer and a handful of fence staples and attach the rope next to the barn door. Then, run it from the other side of the barn door to the door on the pole building. Be sure to put a not in the ends of the rope so they don’t pull out. I’ll start at the house and work my way to you, stopping at the generator house and from there to the pole barn.”

“What next?”

“Put our things in the house and start with the pole barn. We’ll feed them first and when they move to the feed troughs, shovel the manure. Then we can move to the barn and start over. Do you have a flashlight?”

“Oops.”

“Grab one of the 6 volt lanterns. Check to see if the battery has a full charge and bulb isn’t burned out. I brought spares.”

“What about food?”

“The folks’ freezer is full and I threw a case of civilian MREs.”

“Yuck.”

“My thought exactly. I always figured the military fed us those to make us meaner.”

“You may have a point.”

+++++

It took 3 hours between stringing the ropes, tending to the livestock and dumping the last of the manure. When we opened the barn door to return to the house it looked like we were in the first stages of a sandstorm. I handed Gunny a pair of goggles and an N-100 mask. We checked the generator and it running smoothly. I check the clipboard to see when we need to change oil and it was good for ~20 days. We checked the fluid levels and all was as it should be. We continued to the house, pulled off the dust masks and immediately sensed the ash in the air.

I started coffee and hot water for tea. Mom had an assortment of Hungry Man dinners and we each selected one. We had a beer from the refrigerator while we waited for the meals to heat. There were also 4 flavors of ice cream for a desert. I heard Anne on the CB and replied.

“We’re back. I got the meds, a 90 day supply, but didn’t have any luck at the grocery store beyond getting milk. Rachael and I will start a batch of bread in the morning. Have any trouble?”

“We strung rope from the house to the generator building and from there to the pole building and from there to the barn. The livestock is tended to and I’ll wash the eggs before bedtime. Visibility in down to about 75 feet and falling.”

“Right. We were about a mile from home when it hit and we slowed down to a crawl. Daddy is going to clean your air filter in case we have to go out again.”

“There are spare air, oil and fuel filters on the parts shelf in the garage and 4 cases of oil. We have ash in the air here in my folks place. If your eyes start to burn use the shelter with filters.”

“Anne clear.”

“Jon clear.”

“Your folks don’t have a shelter?”

“Yes and no. It’s in the basement and is only big enough for 4-5 people. He has a homemade air filter made out of furnace filters. It seals up tightly and we can stay there. Are your eyes burning?”

“Yes, aren’t yours?”

“Follow me.”

Dad had used a box fan to force air into the filters. It was pure Rube Goldberg, but it did work. It had both 110vac and 12vdc lighting. The four beds were made up and covered in plastic. I set the alarm for 6am and we turned in after I activated the security system, a series of ground motion sensors circling the homestead.

Each sensor had an effective radius of about 25’ and they were planted 40’ apart, each activating a light on a panel representing the homestead. An identical panel was in the den. Dad frequently pointed out that that...just because you’re paranoid doesn’t mean they’re not out to get you, another cliché. I’ll give him one thing, the horn attached to the system that was activated any of the lights on the panel was loud enough to wake the dead.

We were awakened at 4am by the horn sounding. I turned it off, turned on the lights and noted the location.

“What the hell was that?”

“Something tripped a ground motion sensor. Pistols and shotguns, I think. Don’t forget your dust mask and goggles.”

“I’m taking my carbine too, just in case.”

“It might only be a coyote.”

“It’s that sensitive?”

“I had it set on the highest gain setting.”

The boards had lines drawn from the house to the sensors with a compass heading measured at the time Mom and Dad had the sensors installed. Gunny used the compass, viewing it with a shielded light while followed trailing a 7/16" rope. We slung our rifles, Gunny carrying his 590A1 in a tactical sling in front while mine was slung muzzle down on my left shoulder. We were roped together out of an abundance of caution. Light reflected off the ash and would have blinded us except the flashlight was shielded and pointing down. We didn't encounter anyone or anything and after a bit, followed the rope back to the house, loosely coiling it as we went.

"Well, that was a waste of time."

"Like I said Gunny, it was probably a coyote. I'm wide awake so I'm going to put on some coffee. Do you want some or are you going to get more shuteye?"

"Turn that damn alarm off in the shelter; I'm going for 40 winks."

"It's off. I'll have my coffee in the den at the other board."

I took a mug of coffee to the den and confirmed that all the lights on the board were off. I booted Dad's desktop to see if he had any recent stories. He had one I hadn't read, *Arizona Black* by TOM. It was about 120 pages and set in the Cottonwood, Arizona area. I settled in to read it.

"Any of that coffee left?"

"Fresh pot. What are you doing up?"

"You set the alarm clock for 0600, remember?"

"Right. Let me minimize this file and we'll grab a bite."

"Ok, what do you want, cold or hot?"

"What do you have for cereal?"

"Look in the pantry, it's that door there. The milk is in the refrigerator and the bowls are in that cupboard there. Juice? Toast?"

"Yes to both."

I dropped four slices of bread in the toaster and got out the margarine and blackberry preserves from the refrigerator. Next, I set the milk on the table and grabbed a box of Grape Nuts from the pantry. The toast popped up and I buttered it and put it on plates. I set out knives and spoons and set down to put the preserves on my toast. Gunny had selected Cheerios and joined me at the table. We ate in silence except for the crunching as I ate the Grape Nuts.

When All Else Fails – Chapter 7

When we finished, I rinsed the dishes and added them to the dishwasher. The cold items were returned to the refrigerator and the cereal to the pantry. We both made head calls and got ready to do the chores. I checked the generator on the way, it was fine, and we started in the pole barn. We added the hay and when the cattle moved to the hay chutes, shoveled the manure. We dumped that and headed for the barn. Gunny fed a half bale to the hogs and gathered the eggs. He dropped more bales while I moved to shovel the horse manure.

Finally, we added hay to the hay chutes for the horses and took the manure outside to add it to the pile. After we returned to the house, I checked in with Anne and Gunny talked to Rachael. Other than no intruders, that's the way it went for the next two weeks. The only thing that varied was different cereals and replacing the sour milk with instant.

“Anne, tell Jimbo and Tom to plan on swapping places with us this afternoon. Visibility is about ½ mile and it should be fairly clear in another two weeks. Here's Gunny for Rachael.”

“Woo hoo, we're going home.”

“You mean back to our place.”

“No, the worst is past; I think we'll go back to our place.”

“Not smart my friend; you should let our wives clean up your place before you return. I'm sure they kept our place as clean as possible, but the other four places will need a thorough cleaning.”

“I can help Rachael.”

“Have it your way, but don't say I didn't warn you.”

Jimbo and Tom showed up slightly before noon. They checked their trailer first and dropped off their things.

“Jon, could you bring Marilyn back? It's going to take the three of us several days to get our trailer fit to live in.”

“Sure, no problem.”

“She's at Gunny's with four of the five women cleaning up their place. When you go back, you can spring your Mom to replace Marilyn. They said it would take two days to

get Gunny's place cleaned up. They plan to move to Clyde's and finally your parents place. Now, anything that we should be aware of?"

"Not really. We started each time at the pole barn and added hay to the hay chutes. That allowed us to shovel up the manure which we've just dumped in a pile. Then, we hit the barn, feeding the chickens, giving the hogs a half bale and I shoveled the manure. Gunny gathered the eggs and dropped hay from the loft. We filled the hay chutes, dumped the manure and went back to the house. I washed the eggs. I'll leave you a tray and take the rest back to our place."

"Any problems with the generator?"

"Nope. We checked it on every trip just to be sure. We spent most of our time in Dad's basement shelter. Something set off a ground motion sensor the first night, but we couldn't find anyone or anything. There are masks and goggles in the basement next to the door to the shelter."

Gunny had been paying attention and didn't say anything when I passed by their place. We got home, showered, shaved and set down in front of the TV with a cold one. About the time Gunny sat down, they began a summary of the events over the last two weeks, using satellite feeds with voiceovers. It clearly showed the initial ash being mostly blown south due to the weather systems.

Then around 24 hours into the event, the Low began to move allowing the High to move, shifting the ash easterly. They brought it up to the present and Yellowstone was still putting out ash that had reached the east coast. They went on to say that the USGS had no accurate estimate of the volume of ash except that it exceeded Lava Creek and was on its way to exceeding Huckleberry Ridge.

They had a short interview with that Geologist, Lowenstern, and he said they never imagined an eruption like this and that they were shocked at the volume of ash. I swear, he still looks about 25 years old and like he hasn't started to shave. That interview was followed with an interview of a scientist from the University of Utah.

"Can you believe Lowenstern finally admitted that an eruption possible? He said, *This giant eruption will have regional effects such as falling ash and short-term, years to decades, changes to global climate. The surrounding states of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming have been affected, as well as other places in the United States and the world. Such eruptions usually form calderas, broad volcanic depressions created as the ground surface collapses as a result of withdrawal of magma below. We were convinced that the chances of this sort of eruption at Yellowstone were exceedingly small in the next few thousands of years.*"

"Hells bells, it's reached east coast. I think it has to be bigger than Huckleberry Ridge and that was the basis for the Supervolcano Docudrama."

“Serious worldwide effects?”

“Do you doubt it?”

“No, I don’t. What I’m wondering is how our hostile adversaries will react to the effect on their agricultural production.”

“Could get hairy, Gunny.”

“That was my point. You take the world economy, couple with this eruption and the effect on food production over the next few decades and we have too many people on the planet to feed. And, we all know what that means.”

“Damn.”

“Yeah, double damn.”

“Most of our LTS food suppliers are under feet of ash, too.”

“Oregon Freeze Dry?”

“They did get caught up on their production and have the number 10 cans back on their website. We’d have to get cracking and probably pay by wire transfer. We can make our own Super Pails. We have Mylar bags and a sealer. The elevator should have the grains and we can get beans and rice at food Distributors. We’ll have to hit all three Costco stores and all of the Sam’s Clubs in the area for other things, like pasta. We’ll need a greenhouse with grow lights to produce vegetables.

“Dad can you locate and have a greenhouse installed at the Ranch?”

“If we need one.”

“We need one.”

“Consider it done.”

“Let’s see, we have plenty of heirloom seeds but might as well buy hybrids to begin with because they produce more. Let’s make some lists. Gunny, you can hit the Sam’s Clubs and I’ll do the Costco stores and Distributors. We’d better get Anne and Rachael involved if we don’t want to lose our heads. We’ll start tomorrow but I’ll go online and try to bring up the Mountain House website.” (Mountain House is a division of Oregon Freeze Dry.)

I guess dumb luck is better than not having any luck at all. OFD had continued to produce during most of the ongoing volcanic activity and had cases of each product we wanted. I spoke with a representative and got the details to do a bank wire after I got to

the place where I had to select a payment method. She was happy to comply and I gave Dad the information and he called the bank. He had located a commercial greenhouse manufacturer and scheduled an immediate installation by agreeing to pay for the purchase in gold.

“I didn’t know you have that much gold.”

“It’s not Eagles; it’s all in standard 24 carat bar/ingot form. It’s cheaper that way and it allowed me to buy more. Got several sizes up to an including one 400 ounce bar, several 100 ounce bars, 1,000 gram bars and 100 gram bars. That’s in addition to the regular one ounce bars. I made sure I got bars of the exact weights and .9999 fineness.”

“How much do you have?”

“Enough.”

“Silver?”

“One ounce rounds, .9999 fine 5,000 plus 1,000, 100 and 10 ounce bars, .999 fine. Oh, one monster box of silver Eagles...that’s five hundred. Of course I paid nowhere near what the market is running these days. It’s like ammo, buy it cheap and stack it deep. Then you pray like hell the price goes up instead of down.”

“You made some money didn’t you?”

“You might say that. There’s a bag of the old Silver Dollars somewhere but I have no idea what they’re worth.”

“They’re 90% silver and weight 26.73 grams. Therefore they contain 24.057 grams of silver or .7734133 ounces of silver and the last price I heard was \$54.25 so the Silver Dollars are worth about \$41.96 each as a bullion coin. How big a bag?”

“Big and heavy. Like to give me a hernia moving it.”

Looking ahead for just a moment, when we located the bag, it was a flour sack inside a gunny sack and like he said, it was very heavy. I guessed the weight at ~50 pounds.

“That was a lot of money for some freeze dried food.”

“Yes sir, it was. It’s a ten year supply for 18 people. Add it up, Mom and you make 2, Anne and I and our children make it 8, Clyde and Evelyn make it 10, Jimbo and family make 13 and Gunny and family make it 16. I allowed for two extra people. We also tried to corner the market on coffee, bacon, hams, butter, pasta and feminine supplies. We bought 3 25ft³ freezers to hold the bacon, hams and butter. We bought corn, wheat, oats, pinto, great northern, navy and kidney beans in the largest bags available. We

bought a ton of jasmine rice. All of these things were stored in Mylar bags containing oxygen absorbers and sealed. The food will keep until it's eaten. I found a source for bulk cocoa powder and put up a few pails of that. We have grain mills, flakers, roller and so forth.

"I got 3 sets of rebuild parts of your generator and alternator and all the filters available from 4 different locations. We bought oil by the drum. We also got rebuild parts for our Onan generators and all the filters available. They're expecting a shipment via rail and I bought every filter available for our generators. Gunny bought an RS 15000 with installation and found a 10,000 gallon propane tank with a new relief valve."

[All propane tanks better known as cylinders are subject to recertification if it has been 12 years or more since the tanks were manufactured. The recertification process is a simple test performed by a certified propane retailer that ensures your cylinder is still safe to carry propane. Sometimes when your cylinder is recertified it must be upgraded with a new valve if it's required by state law.

There are two types of propane containers, the ASME tank and the DOT cylinder. NFPA pamphlet 58 states that all DOT cylinders need to be recertified after 12 years from the manufacturing date and depending on what certifying method is used they are recertified every 5,7,12 years thereafter. Recertification involves a periodical documented inspection and testing of the cylinder to confirm that the cylinder is still safe and legal to remain in service.

ASME tanks do not get recertified. They should have the relief valve replaced every 10 years and follow the same standards established by the DOT.]

We were gambling on our best guess of what would follow Yellowstone. That guess was that agricultural output around the planet would fall to less than subsistence levels. We were hoping that we were some of the first people to realize the possibility, make that probability.

The ash in the air would reduce the amount of sunlight reaching the surface. That, in turn, would result in lower temperatures and insufficient sunlight to grow plants to their potential. Yellowstone is located at 44°36'N. Moscow is located 55°45'N. Beijing is located 39°55'N. Berlin is located 52°30'N. Paris is located 48°51'N. London is located 51°30'N.

The 44th parallel N passes through France, Italy, the Med, the Adriatic Sea, Croatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, the Black Sea, Russia, the Caspian Sea, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, China, Mongolia, Sea of Japan, Japan, Kuril Islands, and back to the US at the Oregon coast.

On the other hand, that field behind our home would produce just enough grass to feed the livestock, provided we had enough water. The wells were in and all we'd need was power for the pumps. We got our power from Trico and used propane. Water came from

the wells that produced more when they began the CAP project injection water to replenish whichever aquifer we got our water from. The big aquifer was the Avra Valley aquifer, northwest of the city.

I can't avoid it any longer; Gunny and I were worried that between the economic crisis and the volcanic, ergo environmental crisis, the third crisis would be a war. No one can guess these things with any absolute certainty. It could be conventional, nuclear or a combination both starting with one and ending with the other and any mix in between.

Our buying spree was centered not only on surviving the environmental disaster but the potential disaster which it could bring. Dad was back in action buying up hay and grain. The hay was stacked and covered with traps. Hell, I think we even cornered the market on tarps. Two new Harvestore silos were being erected at breakneck speed and he'd bought thousands of bushels of grain and the soybean meal and distiller's grain. The existing silos were topped off with the first of the grain mix and as soon as a silo was finished, we started filling it.

We added a separate extension to the machine shed and equipped it for butchering and processing our livestock. We sold the barrows and kept the 'best' gilts, doubling our hog herd. We did the same with the cattle, increasing our herd by ~50%. Finally we had all the mares bred using an outside stud. With the decrease in our horse herd, Jimbo was not as busy shoeing horses and Tom was at Farrier's School, paid for by the Corporation. He'd signed a contract to work for us for five years in exchange for the education, at a reasonable wage, of course.

Jimbo lay in vast quantities of farrier's supplies including shoes, nails and new tools for Tom. We had all the old saddles from when we'd sold off a portion of our herd and still added a dozen more in a narrow range of sizes. Although we had 'purebred' Quarter Horses, they weren't 100% uniform in size. Dad contacted a saddle maker and acquired the supplies needed for him to produce more saddles if we didn't have enough or the right size. They were stored in the overhead of the machine shed addition.

I recognized from my reading PAW fiction, and especially TOM, that a person can't accumulate everything required in a PAW situation, but we really tried to get what we needed ahead of time rather than scavenging and salvaging. And yes, there's a difference. Looting is a third category that we had no intention of getting involved in. We checked little things, like the replacement lamps for the greenhouse so we didn't end up like Jimmy Holden, looking for bulbs.

Maybe the PAW fiction writers got it right and maybe they were wrong. Either way, they provided food for thought. That led me to acquiring used wheel weights and molds. It led me to acquire large supplies of Pyrodex and primers and bullets and smokeless powder. Gunny was in charge of that aspect, but we did buy more ammo from the folks in Grand Island, which only had ash in feet as opposed to meters.

We had enough firearms for several wars and still acquired more. Single action revolvers and lever action rifles. More ammo for same. Additional SR-556s and magazines, all in 6.8 SPC. An even dozen M1As in the loaded models and 20 round magazines by the case. And for the latter, a pallet of Lake City 7.62x51mm ammo. We loaded up on Gold Dot in all the calibers we used that they manufactured ammo for. What they didn't manufacture, we bought from Hornady. Speer was only available from dealers because their plant was in Lewiston, Idaho, only a little over 310 miles line of sight from Yellowstone.

Gunny got in touch with 'A Friend' and proceeded to acquire all manner of military matériel. Anything they had, that he wanted, he found a source. I don't really know what we're going to do with the M240s and the M2E2s with extra headspaced barrels, but we had them and munitions in abundance. We got a contractor out to build an ammo bunker before it was all said and done. Gunny also bought additional dies for his Hornady loading equipment and every accessory they sold for his model.

"You recognize this?"

"M-61?"

"How'd you know?"

"It has the jungle clip. Where did you find those?"

"One of the guys I contacted found them when he was inventorying. They weren't on any records, so he appropriated them a case at a time. He also found some Vietnam era M-72s, also not on any records. I had to pay gold, but I got all he had, cheap. One guy is going to ship us a pallet of M118LR, a pallet of Mk 318 Mod 0 and a pallet of 6.8 SPC that the Special Ops guys use."

"That should last us to the end of the world."

"Don't go there, you might jinx us. Speaking of jinx, do you know how Jinx Dawson of Coven got her name?"

"I don't even know who Jinx Dawson is."

"Anyway, she was a sole surviving twin. The difficult delivery of twins, one dead in the womb, was performed by a Dr. Jinks, so her model mother named her Jinx. She is a blonde, moderately attractive but into the occult. Some call her 'The Goth Queen'."

"Another Pauley Perrette?"

"Who?"

"Abby on NCIS."

“I don’t watch Navy shows.”

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The ash had made two full circuits of the Earth when the difficulties first began. China was already suffering greatly due to the economic downturn and the inability to unload their US debt. Although the ash had thinned by the time it reached China on the first pass, it put the government in panic mode. Yellowstone was still erupting and they could see it with their own satellites. They could also see what it was doing globally with the same satellites.

China immediately put the PLA on alert status, I suppose somewhat equivalent to our DEFCON 2 or 3. Without so much as a by your leave, or any statement for that matter, they attacked and overwhelmed Taiwan. The US, according to Fox, raised our status to DEFCON 3. They didn’t sortie any carriers groups heading for Taiwan, but all ships made ready and set sail.

Step two was to recall all our troops from all foreign locales, bar none. We were mostly out of Iraq and in the last stages of removing equipment and personnel from Afghanistan. That effort was moved into high gear. Many countries who had cursed the Americans began to lament losing American dollars, even if they weren’t worth much. Nothing was done to oppose China and they moved on Vietnam to acquire their natural resources, oil, and food.

Still, the US did not response beyond filing a protest with the UN. In this day and age, anyone who hasn’t realized that the UN is totally worthless must be in an insane asylum. Overnight, all American surplus ammo disappeared from the market as it was sold down. Every ammunition plant not already running 24 hours a day, 7 days a week geared up to fill government orders.

We got lucky, the matériel Gunny arranged for was delivered before any stop loss was implemented and our bunker was fairly full. State by state, Governors were pressured until they agreed to federalization of their National Guards. States with Defense Forces were lucky that they had some semblance of military left. Each of these states began recruiting efforts to attract veterans to their forces.

10 USC §331 - “Federal aid for State governments”

Whenever there is an insurrection in any State against its government, the President may, upon the request of its legislature or of its governor if the legislature cannot be convened, call into Federal service such of the militia of the other States, in the number requested by that State, and use such of the armed forces, as he considers necessary to suppress the insurrection.

10 USC §332 – “Use of militia and armed forces to enforce Federal authority”

Whenever the President considers that unlawful obstructions, combinations, or assemblages, or rebellion against the authority of the United States, make it impracticable to enforce the laws of the United States in any State or Territory by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings, he may call into Federal service such of the militia of any State, and use such of the armed forces, as he considers necessary to enforce those laws or to suppress the rebellion.

10 USC §333 – “Interference with State and Federal law”

The President, by using the militia or the armed forces, or both, or by any other means, shall take such measures as he considers necessary to suppress, in a State, any insurrection, domestic violence, unlawful combination, or conspiracy, if it -

(1) so hinders the execution of the laws of that State, and of the United States within the State, that any part or class of its people is deprived of a right, privilege, immunity, or protection named in the Constitution and secured by law, and the constituted authorities of that State are unable, fail, or refuse to protect that right, privilege, or immunity, or to give that protection; or

(2) opposes or obstructs the execution of the laws of the United States or impedes the course of justice under those laws.

In any situation covered by clause (1), the State shall be considered to have denied the equal protection of the laws secured by the Constitution.

Arizona does not have Defense Force *per se* however Arizona law provides for an unorganized militia.

26-122. Components of militia

A. The militia is divided into the national guard of Arizona, the state guard when organized, and the unorganized militia.

B. The National Guard consists of commissioned officers, warrant officers, enlisted personnel, organizations, staffs, corps and departments of the federally recognized and regularly commissioned, warranted and enlisted militia of the state, organized and maintained pursuant to law, and all members thereof honorably retired by age or disability.

C. The numerical strength, composition, distribution, organization, arms, uniforms, equipment, training and discipline of the federally recognized National Guard shall be prescribed by the governor in conformity with the allocation of units to the state by the department of the army and the department of the air force of the United States.

D. The inactive National Guard consists of commissioned, warranted and enlisted personnel relieved from assignment to the National Guard by the adjutant general, or at their own request, under regulations prescribed by the department of national defense of the United States, and not reassigned to another component of the armed forces of the United States.

E. The unorganized militia consists of members of the militia not members of the National Guard or state guard when organized.

All of which lent a degree of legitimacy to our efforts, in our minds, if not in fact. Yellowstone tapered off and finally stopped erupting. We celebrated the news, indoors. We only had a few centimeters of ash and worked at breakneck speed to clear, first the pasture, and next the leased hayfield. We used a lot of water in that process. The wells were 6" wells and we used pumps to produce enough pressure to provide 1,500gpm, running a 6" supply line (hose) from the adjoining well.

We were using two 1½" lines to clear the fields. Any larger line would have required two people on the line and we simply lacked the personnel. It was tough enough as it was because we moved all of the ash to the north. None of us wanted a pile of the concrete like ash in our backyards. As it was, we were very lucky with respect to the barn and the house, we didn't get any rain before it was clear enough to wash the ash off the roofs.

When the wells failed to produce enough water, my grandfather and the owner of the three sections installed aboveground pressurized cisterns. My father replaced the jet pumps with submersible pumps, increasing the amount of water available. They had updated the pumps recently with 6" Submersible, 300 GPM, 60 HP, 4" discharge pumps. The pump was built by Sta-rite Water Pumps out of Wisconsin. The wells were deep in every sense of the word. First, they were drilled all the way down to the aquifer and second, they had a huge drawdown. Those three wells were about 500' deep.

Money can't buy happiness, that's reserved for love. On the other hand, money can sure help out. I wouldn't say we were 100% prepared, that would jinx us for sure. Maybe we were prepared as well or better than most folks, primarily because we were rather frugal until it came time to spend the money. And when the time came, we had it and spent it. I didn't doubt for one minute that all that gold and silver Dad had was unrecorded anywhere and would most likely be passed from parents to son, under the table.

There was no record of my gold and silver purchases. The dealers sold it to Mr. Cash. I'm certain that Mr. Cash did a lot of transactions with the same dealers I did. The probably all read PAW fiction, too. I learned a lot from Neal Grant, Jimmy Holden, Dominic, Leonard and the others.

Before I get back to the matters at hand, one thing that struck me about TOM and Jerry were their preferred firearms, .32acp, .45acp, 7.62x51mm NATO and 12 gauge shotgun. The difference lay in the brand of their preferred arms, Beretta .32 vs. Sauer

.32, Glock .45 vs. Taurus PT1911, PTR-91K vs. M1A Loaded and custom Remington 11-87 vs. Mossberg 590A1

When All Else Fails – Chapter 8

Both seemed to favor Cold Steel knives, just different models. TOM didn't have a lot of gadgets while Jerry preferred the best of any particular brand. TOM included links in his stories and Jerry described the equipment in some detail. However, many of TOM links were dead links and many of the models Jerry mentioned were no longer manufactured. No doubt, in both cases, the items were available when the stories were written, but the stories stood still while the times changed and new products replaced the old.

The M1A Super match was about the same as Elmer originally sold it except the barrel was now a heavy, match grade barrel with one turn in ten rather than one turn in twelve. Newer scopes were also available, providing far better optics. Night scopes were no longer Starlight scopes but generation III+ lightweight optics with greatly improved illumination. Match grade ammo offerings had improved considerably.

At the same time Katadyn still made the best water filters and Sawyer had their Point Zero Two. Therm-a-rest and Slumber Jack still made top line sleeping bags and Mountain Hardwear outstanding tents. Even Integral Designs had added to their product line with square Siltarps.

One of the most disappointing disappearances had been Cabela's Magnum Game Cart with wheel kit and wheel shields. The manufacturer went bankrupt and the substitute products left much to be desired.

We even bought some instant grits just to try time out. They were pretty decent. Even TOM's trailmix recipe was slightly different from Jerry's Gorp recipe because TOM used a Honey Roasted nut medley containing almonds, cashews and macadamia nut plus raisins and plain M&Ms.

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There was total news blackout concerning our naval forces. There were no embedded reporters of any stripe. The Navy had always taken a position a bit different from the Army and Air Force. MSM could do nothing more than speculate. The people it really mattered to, the Pentagon and hostile foreign nations could track surface combatants and only the Pentagon knew approximately where the boomers. The boomers were assigned patrol areas and that was as close as the Pentagon could come without direct communications from the Ohio class submarines.

A portion of our Mountain House order had consisted of the entrée pouches and desert pouches. They were better than MREs and it was a simple matter to include an accessories package. Some of the items, bath tissue, coffee, tea, salt, pepper, sugar,

ketchup and tabasco came from Minimus dot biz; others came from the grocery Distributor and some from grocery stores. Each person set up their individual travel supplies and Anne and Rachael prepared the children's supplies.

We now sat back and when not occupied with chores followed the news very closely. In addition to MSM, we monitored the shortwave and Ham bands. The tension was thick enough to cut with a knife.

Because our regular butcher had time available, we took the opportunity and had him butcher, cut and wrap three steers, six hogs and our broilers. He didn't seem to be happy over processing the broilers so we processed our own layers, purchasing replacements. The number was kept at 75.

"Want to check out the reloads?"

"Which ones?"

"How about some of each?"

"Suits me. It will give us a chance to see just how good your guarantee was."

We fired a course with 750gr A-MAX, Mk 211 and M1022. The only sight adjustment made was from the A-MAX to Mk 211. Next, we fired a course with 168gr A-MAX, no corrections needed. That was followed by a course of 6.8 SPC with the same results. Finally we fired the 5.56 and it compared favorably with the Hornady. I couldn't really tell on the shot shells but they seemed to group slightly tighter. I called it off because the pistol ammo was short range and close counts.

"I'll take the brass and reload it. Give me a day."

"Take all the time you need, if there's on thing we're not short on, it is ammo."

"Want to shoot some practice loads for your M-203?"

"You have some?"

"A few and I can reload them, too."

"Maybe we should run a weapons familiarization course. It couldn't hurt to have everyone able to pick up someone else's weapons and use them effectively."

"Now you sound like a Marine."

"Watch it, I don't take insults easily."

“We need to runs some ammo through those M1As you bought to break in the actions. It’s not like we’re short on surplus. How much of the DAG did you buy?”

“A few thousand rounds, but don’t forget that pallet load of Lake City; 66 cases to the pallet. It’s on five round strippers, 2 strippers per pocket, 6 pockets per bandoleer, 5 bandoleers per can, 3 cans per case or 900 rounds per case. That’s 59,400 rounds on that pallet.”

“We’re in good shape, ammo wise. The pallet of M118LR holds the same and there are all of the personal supplies we had before. I have enough reloading supplies to reload the 7.62 one time, the 6.8 SPC twice and the 5.56x45mm twice. All the empty brass has been reloaded and distributed plus I sold the Berdan primed to a metal salvage outfit. You want the \$24.50 I got?”

“Keep it; it will cover your cost of fuel.”

“Not hardly. I paid over \$8 a gallon for diesel.”

“Dad is having the big diesel tanks refilled with biodiesel and adding PRI-D and an anti-gel. It’s nice to have the power back. I called the propane company and ordered refills for all of our tanks. You like the RS 15000?”

“Yeah. Really messed up not getting a genset before we needed it.”

“I simply forgot to say anything because you knew we had a generator.”

“Why are they called generators? They’re engine driven alternators.”

“I don’t really know. Maybe because they used generators before alternators were developed? Generators were direct current and if I remember, early AC generators were called dynamos and produced a pulsed DC output. Alternators, conversely, produce AC.”

“Oh, an EM, too.”

“Knew an Electrician’s Mate.”

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After we completed the morning chores, we ran two groups through a weapons familiarization program we drummed up at the last moment. Everyone shot each weapon type we had, starting with the military types and finishing with older style single and lever actions. It was very basic, the safety, loading and clearing a malfunction. It included instruction on when not to try and clear a malfunction, i.e. in the case of a head separation. Not that it’s that hard to do, but in the heat of battle...

We kept our weapons clean, avoiding pitted chambers, one cause head separation. We used the reloads for practice ammo, keeping the newly manufactured ammo for honest to goodness battle situations. We could do that now that that Gunny was set up to reload all calibers.

When we weren't working or on the range, we were glued to the TV, watching news channels. Once China had conquered the area formerly known as French Indochina... Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia... they moved on Thailand. The US positioned the Pacific Fleet to halt the expansion from the Asian mainland. Blocked, China opted to attack Myanmar (Burma).

While Russia didn't out and out say they backed China's expansion, they were reincorporating the Republics. They stopped short of Poland, Hungary and the former Czechoslovakia. MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN...our government began to see the handwriting on the wall and went to DEFCON 2.

The greenhouse proved to be a blessing as the temperatures continued to fall. We planted root crops outside and everything else inside. Our wives toured Tucson buying up every canning jar and lid they could find. They then took two trucks and trailers to Phoenix and repeated the process. The machine shed addition was beginning to fill.

Dad instructed Jimbo and Tom to stack the new hay four layers deep around the barn and cover it with heavy plastic. The loft was filled to the brim with hay and straw and they didn't bother to cover the roof. They then repeated the process on the pole building and filled in the loft when they finished with outside.

Our status, at that moment was four filled silos of the mixed grain, filled hay lofts and tarped stacks of alfalfa in nearly every empty spot. All fuel tanks were full and 32,000 gallons of biodiesel plus 9,000 gallons of gasoline were stored in leased tankers. An over-the-road propane tanker containing 9,000 gallons was parked at our home.

We had filled our freezers to almost overflowing. A steer was butchered and canned. The produce grown in the greenhouse was likewise canned and a cold cellar was hastily constructed to store the potatoes, carrots, squash and melons. The greenhouse was replanted by Mom and Marilyn while Anne and Rachael canned and Evelyn babysat.

We sold the first litters of hogs and they brought big money. Eighty sows at an average of 12 pigs each at 225 pounds at \$1.09 a pound equaled \$235 thousand in round numbers. Money and gold in hand, Dad made a lowball offer on the land behind our homes...and they accepted. Times were hard and you'll never get rich growing alfalfa and leasing out the land parttime, especially for some time to come. The 1,680 was seeded with a mixture of 40% rye, 40% mixed clover and 20% Arizona fescue.

We confined mares with foal in the dry lot and fed them alfalfa and grain during the last three months before they foaled. Fescue sometimes contains ergot alkaloids and can

poison mares during the last 3 months of their pregnancy. We didn't consider it likely with the rich mixture of alfalfa, rye and clover but why take a chance. We helped the grass along with light irrigation until it could get established.

We finally had market weight cattle and reserved 3 head for butchering. We sold 155 head averaging 1,250 pounds for \$1.76 a pound, producing an additional \$341 thousand and Dad finished paying off the land. We still cleared a profit. The land went for \$450, a total of \$756 thousand and we had \$235 from the first sale of hogs, \$341 from the sale of cattle and \$237 from the second sale of hogs for a total of \$813 thousand.

If we could do that the next year, there would be over a million divided among several bank accounts with different banks. Should the worst happen, we'd still have a significant portion of the food available in the area. We could always switch to producing food crops like wheat, oats, corn and beans. With that in mind, we bought a large mill and medium sized commercial flaker and roller.

Anne turned in our expired medical supplies and replaced them with new supplies. She also kept a weather eye on possibilities and loaded up on blood stopper bandages. You do know that some of those products are expensive don't you? But, what's a life worth?

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It at first appeared that both China and Russia had met their goals of acquiring additional food supplies and/or natural resources (oil). Russia didn't call the reformed nation the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, opting instead to retain the title of the Russian Federation. They insisted they were still a Democratic Federation. Have you read *Animal Farm*?

Despite the absence of imbedded reporters with the Pacific Fleet, we were getting some news. Rather than return the boomers to port to swap crews and provision, the blue and gold crews were swapped out and the subs were resupplied using unreprs. Any spare parts needed were included in the unreprs and substantial stocks were maintained in the T-AKEs, Lewis and Clark class, which had been completed and were in service.

When the government decided that China and Russia had concluded their expansion programs, naval vessels were brought into port, one group at a time and repaired, resupplied, made personnel changes as required and returned to sea. The same applied for the 4 SSGNs and the 14 SSBNs, one at a time port visits for the same purposes.

Military forces were employed in the cleanup of our country under the direction of the Army Corps of Engineers and the Navy Construction Battalions. Where to you put 870 cubic miles of volcanic ash? Anywhere you can. Some was dumped into abandoned pit mines; some in unused quarries and some was loaded aboard ships and dumped in the

Atlantic and Pacific. They used grain haulers since there was no grain to haul to far off places.

Not being trusting souls, we concluded that the next time the weather radios activated could very well be the signal that missiles were in the air. That ended out-of-town trips. Anything we needed was ordered and shipped by common carrier to Tucson. We'd go to town grocery shopping or other shopping; like the trips where the Anne and Rachael spent a small fortune buying clothing for the five children and four adults.

I swear they had a bee in their bonnets, based on some of the purchases. We had the 12 loaded M1As. They ordered 12 national match flashhiders from Fulton Armory with the bayonet lugs and had them installed. They bought more and bayonets for all of the bayonet lugs. They no sooner had that project finished than they went on a class III buying spree. Any military style firearm without a suppressor got a suppressor. That pretty much negated having flashhiders with bayonet lugs. You knew that Surefire now made suppressors in 5.56, 6.8, 7.62 and .338, didn't you? All four calibers were available with a Fast Attach Muzzle Brake adapter but the .338 wasn't available in the Fast Attach Flashhider adapter.

It didn't matter because we didn't have any .338 caliber rifles in either the Winchester or Lapua cartridge. Frankly, we didn't need them; we had M-21s and Tac-50s. Several. All six rifles were equipped with top of the line optics and MUNS. And for any CQC, we had the Rugers both in 5.56 and 6.8 SPC. If anything, we were over-gunned.

Russia closed its borders tight, like back in the days of the Berlin Wall. China put to sea, trying to outflank the US Fleet, headed for Australia. Australia didn't get a lot of ash, but their weather had been awful, mostly droughts. Maybe the Chinese were thinking of taking Australia and starting a massive irrigation project. Our Fleet wasn't outflanked and met the Chinese force head on.

In an on-again off-again battle, our superior naval forces began to take a heavy toll on Chinese naval forces. The Chinese naval force withdrew and China launched 3 MIRV'd missiles against our forces, taking a heavy toll. The president unglued his hands from his butt and retaliated using all 450 Minuteman III missiles.

Despite the treaties, all 14 of the SSBNs were carrying 8 warheads per missile and those warheads were reserved for anyone who objected to our retaliation against China. The most likely country, Russia held off; apparently they were getting the ducks in a row.

We were actually watching TV when the EAS screen was presented and the weather radios went off. We heard the announcement in stereo. It was the dreaded Air Defense Emergency; Russia was attacking the US in response to our retaliation against China. Well, 450 missiles retrofitted with 3 MIRV's each wasn't exactly a proportional response. But we didn't know how many missiles had been launched or how many warheads they carried. Let's see, that's 1,350, right?

Russia had 4 of the Borei class subs and the Bulava missiles now worked. Those were held in reserve. And, those SS-18 Satan's that they retired? Well, they might be tired, but they weren't retired. Moved, yes; retired, no. We should have lied about our comparable missile, the Peacekeeper. I mean, we could have removed them and left the silos open for a while and closed the empty silos in broad daylight when they had a satellite overhead. After which we could sneak in one missile a night until all 50 were back in place.

Of course all this crap in Russia started when George's buddy Vladimir was reelected as president. George and Laura? They were inspecting their property in Paraguay with their daughters and spouses. If any conspiracy theorists survive the attack, they're going to have a field day.

Since we kept the livestock in the dry lot or barn at night, it was only a matter of minutes to have them shut-in and the door spaces block with bales. We were all in the shelter when the first warhead hit. That went on for a while and apparently Tucson had been targeted and the warhead fell short or overshot. We got quite a shake, wherever it hit.

"Crap."

"I call and raise that."

"Jimbo were the hay chutes full?"

"Yes, nearly overflowing. The automated system will feed grain even if they run out of hay. I just serviced that generator and it was ready to go. With most everything shutdown, it won't burn much fuel. It's a shame we never got any of those submarine batteries or we could save the unused power."

"I thought you ordered some."

"I thought Harry ordered them."

"Dad?"

"I thought you ordered them."

"Well, that's spilt milk. I'd imagine that France is attacking the UK and Germany about now and Germany is attacking Russia and France. The UK is probably attacking France and Russia and anyone who has a nuke is using it before they lose it."

"TOM was right after all."

"I wonder if Jerry has a bugout location, they're sure to hit Reno."

“What about Palmdale?”

“What about Palmdale? None of the aircraft in Blackbird Park fly and nobody knows what Lockheed is doing at the Skunk Works.”

“Jon, is that a smirk I detect?”

“No, not a smirk, it’s more a sense of vindication. We have long thought that something could affect civilization in a very negative way. Because of those beliefs, we prepared for the eventuality. It became a way of life for us and we prepared as best as humanly possible. We may have missed some things, but, we have a roof over our heads, clean air to breathe, water to drink and food to eat. We have a means of transportation, be it mechanical or animal. We have fuel and animal feed.

“We have electrical power, at least for the moment. All of the generators have EMP protection so we shouldn’t lose the electronic controls and they should continue to run until we can acquire an alternative. Most of all, we have our families and all of our loved ones.”

“And, we have guns.”

“Yes we do. But, be careful where you tread. Did you ever read Jerry’s story *Low Profile*?”

“Nope.”

“It had a character, Bobby Jones. Bobby had guns but no other preps. He used his guns to get what he didn’t have. Yes, we have guns, ammo and enough ordnance to fight a war. I consider them to be defensive only. We don’t need to go looking for trouble. Trouble will find us all on its own.”

“Ok, trouble will find us. I think we should consider moving to the four homes closest to the Ranch. It would allow the fastest response when trouble comes looking.”

“That’s worth a thought. Once we’re out of this shelter, we can look into it. However, look at the radiation meters. We’re not going anywhere for a while.”

“How long?”

“Eight Days to reach $\frac{1}{2}$ Rad. Two weeks to reach $\frac{1}{4}$ Rad and a month to reach one-tenth Rad. One-tenth Rad per hour is the maximum continuous exposure level permissible. An hour at $\frac{1}{2}$ Rad is the same as 5 hours at one-tenth Rad. We can go to the ranch at $\frac{1}{2}$ Rad as long as we switch off to limit our exposure.”

“So what’s the current reading?”

“Two hundred fifty Rads per hour.”

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“Do you think they’ll have the military and National Guard out helping FEMA?”

“If any portion FEMA is still left, they’re probably hiding in Mt. Weather. Don’t believe what we saw on TV, I’m sure the government has an identical ‘set’ in every shelter the president might use. He could be anywhere, but the hardest target is Cheyenne Mountain. The military and National Guards are dead, with their families, sheltered or trying to get to their families; which means their dead and just haven’t dropped yet.”

“What makes you say that?”

“At ground zero, the typical nuke puts out 3,000 Rads. You don’t care about the radiation because you’ve been vaporized. I have one of TOM’s stories on my computer. Let me look it up, it will explain better.

“Here you go, I printed it out.”

The effects of a 1mT surface burst assuming a wind speed of 15mph, a wind direction of due east and a time frame of 7 days are:

3,000 Rem

Distance: 30 miles

Much more than a lethal dose of radiation. Death can occur within hours of exposure. About 10 years will need to pass before levels of radioactivity in this area drop low enough to be considered safe, by US peacetime standards.

900 Rem

Distance: 90 miles

A lethal dose of radiation. Death occurs from two to fourteen days.

300 Rem

Distance: 160 miles

Causes extensive internal damage, including harm to nerve cells and the cells that line the digestive tract, and results in a loss of white blood cells. Temporary hair loss is another result.

90 Rem

Distance: 250 miles

Causes a temporary decrease in white blood cells, although there are no immediate harmful effects. Two to three years will need to pass before radioactivity levels in this area drop low enough to be considered safe, by US peacetime standards.

Radius of destructive circle: 1.7 miles

12 pounds per square inch

At the center lies a crater 200 feet deep and 1000 feet in diameter. The rim of this crater is 1,000 feet wide and is composed of highly radioactive soil and debris. Nothing recognizable remains within about 3,200 feet (0.6 miles) from the center, except, perhaps, the remains of some buildings' foundations. At 1.7 miles, only some of the strongest buildings – those made of reinforced, poured concrete – are still standing. Ninety-eight percent of the population in this area is dead.

Radius: 2.7 miles
5 psi

Virtually everything is destroyed between the 12 and 5-psi rings. The walls of typical multi-story buildings, including apartment buildings, have been completely blown out. The bare, structural skeletons of more and more buildings rise above the debris as you approach the 5-psi ring. Single-family residences within this area have been completely blown away – only their foundations remain. Fifty percent of the population between the 12 and 5-psi rings are dead. Forty percent are injured.

Radius: 4.7 miles
2 psi

Any single-family residences that have not been completely destroyed are heavily damaged. The windows of office buildings have been blown away, as have some of their walls. The contents of these buildings' upper floors, including the people who were working there, are scattered on the street. A substantial amount of debris clutters the entire area. Five percent of the population between the 5 and 2-psi rings are dead. Forty-five percent are injured.

Radius: 7.4 miles
1 psi

Residences are moderately damaged. Commercial buildings have sustained minimal damage. Twenty-five percent of the population between the 2 and 1-psi rings are injured, mainly by flying glass and debris. Many others have been injured from thermal radiation – the heat generated by the blast. The remaining seventy-five percent are unharmed.

“We can’t even take a quick peek to see if the house is still standing?”

“I’d rather not open the blast door before the 8th day. And we’ll hang the X-Ray curtains before we open the door.”

“X-Ray curtains?”

When All Else Fails – Chapter 9

“You know those heavy wraps that X-Ray technicians use? They’re called Lead Curtains, Blocking Sheets, Portable & Fluoro Shields, Blockers & Sheeting among other things.”

“Gotcha. What they put in your lap when they X-Ray close to your privates.”

“Right. They don’t want to sterilize someone accidentally. Lead is the most common shield against X-rays because of its high density, stopping power, ease of installation and low cost. The maximum range of a high-energy photon such as an X-ray in matter is infinite; at every point in the matter traversed by the photon, there is a probability of interaction. Thus there is a very small probability of no interaction over very large distances. The shielding of photon beam is therefore exponential; doubling the thickness of shielding will square the shielding effect.”

“Not the same as Gamma rays?”

“Close. It’s a different frequency but more recently there is a significant overlap due equipment changes more than anything.”

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On the 8th day, Gunny and I suited up in level B protective garments and put new filters in our MSA Millennium gas masks. After putting on the boots we used the tape we got from Approved Gas Masks, zeroed our dosimeters and hung the Lead Curtain before opening the blast door in the basement wall. The house was intact and Gunny’s Suburban started so we headed for the Ranch.

We checked the generator, confirming it was running fine and once more started at the Pole building. We unstacked just enough hay to slip in and were met by an anxious herd of cattle. As soon as we had the hay troughs refilled, they chowed down and we cleaned up the manure as quickly as possible.

We next went to the barn and dropped several bales of hay and a couple of straw. Gunny fed the hogs and collected eggs. I shoveled up the hog manure and dumped it on the pile. He began to fill the hay chutes for the horses and I shoveled that manure next. Finally we put down new straw bedding.

After checking the house, we returned home to the basement and showered off the PPE before removing our masks and entering the shelter. Rachael and Anne were baking bread despite the ‘help’ Evelyn and Mom provided them. Our wives had bread baking to a true art and most ignored their elders. They made two batches, one consisting of 6 loaves of bread and a pan of cinnamon rolls and the other consisting of hamburger and hot dog buns, French loaves and dinner rolls.

“I love the smell of fresh bread. Did you two decide on dinner?”

“Yes we did meatloaf and baked potatoes. Next time you go out please bring in more potatoes. We worked out a 30 day menu and it’s mostly based on our STS. It’s on the bulletin board; check it out if you have any suggestions.”

“I will thanks. The next trip will be Jimbo and Tom and they’ll make the trip on day 14. I checked our dosimeters and as nearly as I can tell, we accumulated a hair over 1 Rad. Even the cattle were glad to see us. The eggs are in the tunnel and need to be washed.”

“My Mom and Diane can do that and get out from underfoot.”

“Be patient. I think we can go out for 8 hours at a time in another three weeks. Did you hear Gunny’s suggestion about moving to the 4 houses closest to the Ranch?”

“Yes, and Rachael and I discussed it. It would be fine except the only shelter is here. Where would you get a new Safe Cell and the related equipment?”

“I’ve thought about that and I’m really not sure. It would be a bear moving the generator and there’s no way we could move the fuel tanks. I had one thought about possibly doing the same except moving Gunny and Jimbo in the houses between your folk’s home and ours. We could pump out Gunny’s fuel tank and move it to their new home. We have the farm truck so it wouldn’t take too many trips. I haven’t brought it up with Jimbo and Marilyn just yet.”

“That would still leave an empty home between my folks and us.”

“Tom is at the age where he might want his own place so that would fill the gap.”

“Does he have a girlfriend?”

“You know, I’ve never asked. I overheard something he said to Dad about putting in a second mobile home so maybe Tom does have a girlfriend. I’ll confirm that with Jimbo when we discuss the possibility of them moving.”

“I know that you know better than to assume because you explained it to me. Maybe I can bring it up in a casual conversation with Marilyn.”

“If they’re short on firearms, it won’t be a problem equipping them. We have the M1A loadeds and SR-556s in 5.56. It shouldn’t be hard pick up a pair of shotguns and the handguns. I know he has single action and lever action firearms because I’ve seen them. He was carrying a Marline 1894 Cowboy and wearing a 5½” New Model Vaquero in .45 Colt. He said something about an 1895 Cowboy and I’ll assume, for the moment, he has another Vaquero.”

“Any ideas about protecting our homes and the Ranch?”

“This road dead ends at Dad’s west property line and if we put up a roadblock, it would at least force them to go cross country. Maybe we could put an OP on the roof of the barn.”

“OP?”

“Sorry, Observation Point. If we could get a pair of Steiner 20x80 Military binoculars we could see all four sections. They put you at an effective distance of less than 100 yards from one mile-distant targets or other objects.”

“Heavy?”

“They weigh about 3½ pounds and are expensive as all get out.”

“Boys and their toys!”

“Hey I represent that. I mean I...”

“Stop before you get in any deeper.”

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“...so that’s what we discussed Jimbo. I don’t need an answer right away. Does Tom have a girlfriend?”

“Does a fiancée count?”

“Definitely. Why didn’t he offer her a place in our shelter?”

“Oh, her dad had an earth covered monolithic dome.”

“Really, you’re talking big money for one of those.”

“He has, or at least had, big money. He is a genuine died in the wool Survivalist and I understand he resents being referred to as a prepper.”

“There are always some true survivalists like Kurt Saxon. He is said to have coined the term "survivalism" to refer to making preparations for a future collapse of society and/or a major disaster. He’s may well be the reason why Survivalist became a hate word in the MSM.”

“So, are you a prepper or Survivalist?”

“Yep. I follow the political views of Thomas Jefferson. While we’re primarily preppers, that doesn’t mean that I wouldn’t get involved in a rebellion if we couldn’t straighten out Washington with the ballot box. We most definitely have the means to raise a small militia unit were it to become necessary. It would all depend on what happens next. We have three things working against us, the economic downturn, Yellowstone and this damned nuclear war.

“Gunny and I were convinced that war was inevitable because of the world economy and the worldwide effects of Yellowstone. That’s the primary reason we went on the buying jag. You’d be surprised at the amount expended in last minute preparations.”

“I doubt that. I saw the grain silos and greenhouse going up and your Dad buying the remainder of the three sections. I was also aware that the two of you were loading up on ordnance. I don’t know how much you bought, but since you had a bunker built to hold it, I assumed it must have been large quantities. Plus you leased and filled a pair of double diesel tankers, a gasoline tanker and a propane tanker.

“I don’t know how you came out in the long run but you should have come close to covering the expense.”

“We actually made a profit, even including the land purchase. Not much, but we had money left over.”

“The corporation paid the estimated tax and got an extension to file the tax return. Fortunately the war came before we had a chance to file and pay the balance due. One of the exceptions to the penalty is paying an amount in excess of the prior year’s tax according to the CPA.”

“Our thought on the housing was that if Tom had a girlfriend, they might fill the fifth house. While I seriously doubt we’d need it, perhaps an earth covered monolithic dome might not be a bad idea. Dad and I discussed buying three of the empty homes for our kids and since there are more than four between the Ranch and here we might claim on three or four of them.”

“You do realized that we’re going to need to cut the herds don’t you because of the livestock feed situation?”

“I’d already planned on that, except for the horses and chickens. I was thinking of cutting down to 10 sows and 20 cows. I won’t cut the horse herd since they’ve suddenly become a major asset.”

“Your Dad lay in a large supply of leather and parts for more saddles. Let’s hope that saddle maker survived.”

“Good point. Now, about exiting the shelter. The radiation level will hit about one-tenth Rad at the end of a month. I intend that the children sleep in the shelter until the

radiation reaches 25 millirads or about 100 days. Considering Tom's age and the fact that males are more susceptible to the effects of radiation, I would prefer he sleep here for at least 9 weeks. If he can manage to sleep here the same 100 days as the children, it's unlikely the radiation will have any effect on his reproductive capacity."

"Less is better?"

"It sure is when it pertains to radiation. Radiation decay is explained by the 7/10 rule and I can show you the spreadsheet I use to calculate shelter stay time. I told you it would reach 25 millirads at 100 days. But it won't reach 2.5 millirads until 700 days or nearly 2 years and won't reach 0.25 millirads until about 13½ years and a tenth of that for 95 years."

"I always thought the old Civil Defense guideline was two weeks."

"It was, but what the Civil Defense authorities failed to tell the population but that had limited applications and mostly applied to people who didn't receive much fallout. Ask Gunny to show you the printout I did for him. It shows downwind radiation values and the amount of time until radiation falls to acceptable levels. The basis for the two weeks was the 7/10 rule. Three hundred-forty-three hours is 7 to the third power and the radiation would have fallen to one-thousandth of the original level. However, based on my review of that spreadsheet, sometimes it was necessary to wait for seven to the fourth power which is 2,401 hours or 100 days."

"Then why did they say two weeks?"

"I have no idea as to their reasoning. More importantly, I still don't understand why they eliminated the Civil Defense program and replaced it with FEMA. Is there anyone who is not aware of what happened with Hurricane Katrina?"

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Jimbo and Tom had the rotation 6 days after ours or on day 14. They were out about the same amount of which meant they received less radiation than us. The next trip would be on day 21 and it would be Gunny and me a second time. Jimbo and Tom had been exposed to ¼ Rad/hour and Gunny and I would be exposed to 200mR per hour. We would each have one more rotation after that and that final rotation Gunny and I would be exposed at 100mR/hour level.

We all discussed how we were going to deal with the livestock and decided to keep them in the barns and dry lot until we could do something with our pasture. The easiest choice was plowing the soil under, disking and dragging and reseeding with the alfalfa, rye, red clover and fescue mix, irrigating enough to get the grass well established. We had decided to sell down the hogs and cattle to the level I mentioned, so we had more than enough hay and mixed grain.

The thirty days passed, well, in thirty days. Rachael and Anne were decidedly unhappy about 'imprisoning' the children in the shelter at night for 100 days. Tom was even more upset and accused Gunny and I of treating him like 'a little kid' Rather than argue, I explained it to Jimbo. Jimbo wanted grandchildren and told Tom, 'just do it'. When Tom looked like he wanted to argue, Jimbo raised his right index finger and it was 'a done deal'.

As it was, we weren't totally certain we should have let Tom out for full days at 100mR, but the level was falling quickly and by some fluke of nature, we didn't received radiation from either San Diego or Los Angeles. Given his freedom, Tom took off to say with his fiancée's family. When Cheryl and he returned, they were pulling a trailer with a 15kw diesel generator and a truck followed with an assortment of household goods. Both were wearing wedding rings.

"I heard about the houses. Which one is ours?"

"I'll show you. Got married, huh?"

"Had a preacher but no license. Her Dad is having an above ground diesel tank brought over tomorrow. I'll get Dad to help unload the generator and mount the ATS. Her's is a contractor and will have an electrician wire it up, tomorrow."

"Look, about staying in the shelter; I only had your best interests in mind."

"No problem, WE'LL stay in the shelter at nights."

"If that was your problem why didn't you just say so?"

"You may be my employer, but frankly, my personal life is none of your business."

"You're right, sorry."

I noticed she had a matching Vaquero strapped on and was carrying the 1894 while he had the 1895 and a bandoleer of shiny new brass shells with what I took to be 405gr round nose lead bullets. Everyone pitched in and helped unload the truck and generator. Jimbo mounted the ATS next to the breaker panel and our wives helped Cheryl unpack her kitchen and linens.

The furniture was limited, but included a king size bedroom suite, a crib with changing table and a single bed with a chest of drawers and a desk. One box they unpacked contained communications gear, an Icom HF radio, a scanning receiver, a Galaxy base station and so forth. Tom said the truck would be back with second load the following day.

"Mr. DeSoto, we don't have any military type weapons beyond Mossberg 590A1 SPX shotguns and ammo. Dad said to talk to you."

“How about an M1A loaded for you and a Ruger SR-556 for Cheryl?”

“Do you have two loadeds and enough magazines and ammo?”

“Sure and we have more than enough good DAG surplus. What about pistols and backup handguns?”

“Her Dad gave us both Glock 21s and Glock 30s with more than enough magazines and a small quantity of surplus military ball ammo.”

“We’ll get you some 230gr Gold Dot out of the bunker when we get the DAG. How are you set on shotgun shells?”

“We have the same shells your Dad uses, Black Magic slugs, 15 pellet 00 and 41 pellet # 4 buckshot.”

“If we’re done unloading, let’s get you the weapons and ammo. We have a surplus of SR-556s at the moment. Would you like 2 for backup rifles?”

“Uh, no thanks. Cheryl’s Dad has a pair of SR-556s for us in 6.8 SPC. Can you believe it, in addition to all of the other things he gave us 500 silver Eagles and one hundred-twenty ounces of gold, all in tenth ounce Eagles? Plus her share of their LTS, enough for one person for twenty years. I knew they were well off, but had no idea he was rich. He has separate safes to hold his gold and silver! Said he bought most of his gold in 2001 after Bush became president. He paid less than \$300 an ounce for the gold and less than \$5 an ounce for the silver.”

“Buy a lot did he?”

“He didn’t say, but those safes are huge! He said he bought the same number of ounces of each. He called it his hedge. Then, after 9/11, he doubled his holdings. He said the safes were already full so he stored it in quote a safe place unquote. What a hedge?”

“A hedge is a contract or arrangement reducing one’s exposure to risk; in this case, financial risk.”

“Cheryl said she thinks he spent several million dollars on the precious metals. He has a much smaller safe of the same quality than contains some other part of his hedge but I have no idea what it contains.”

“It could be investment grade diamonds. I looked into it and typically the so called standard investment grade diamond weighs 1 carat, is flawless, a D color rating and an excellent cut rating by GIA. Stones meeting all the proper criteria are very valuable and carry a GIA rating sheet with the stone. They were too rich for my blood.”

"I suppose it could be gemstones."

"Who built his dome?"

"He did...well, his company did. It's neat. It has a basement for storage and mechanicals, and the main floor with the living space. It's huge with a forty foot radius. That's over 5,000ft² each on the main level and lower level and lesser amounts on the second, third and fourth level. There are more mechanicals on the fourth level. I think I once heard him say something about 20 thousand plus square feet. His generator is Kohler 100kw diesel and he had five 40,000 gallon tanks of biodiesel and tons of chemicals stored."

"Does he have biodiesel equipment?"

"Yes and a setup with three stills for pure ethanol. He said he can mix E-85 gasoline until he runs out of gasoline. He has a sixth 40,000 gallon tank with stabilized premium unleaded."

"That's enough to make over a quarter million gallons of E-85. He doesn't do things in a small way, does he?"

"Not so you'd notice. He has a pair of 2006 H-1 Hummer Alphas on blocks in his detached garage with all the electronics pulled and stored in the dome along with spare parts of every description."

"I suppose he drives a tricked out Suburban?"

"How did you know?"

"It just figured. One or two?"

"One plus a matching crew cab long bed pickup that tricked out about the same way. It doesn't have the Chevy engine though. He replaced it with a ..."

"Cummins 6BT."

"Seems like you have him figured out."

"Perhaps, to an extent. I heard him described as a Survivalist who disliked being called a prepper."

"Dad?"

"As a matter of fact, yes."

“He’s the type of guy that PAW fiction writers like to write about, enough money to burn and they buy one of everything.”

“I’m not that much different than him. I mean it took a while to get started, but when we did, we went at it full bore and spent our money as fast as we earned it. By then the economy was in the toilet and every day you held your money, it lost value. It’s strange mix, a recession bordering on a depression and runaway inflation. Inflation is supposed to fall during a recession along with other economic elements.”

“I wondered about. It didn’t make much sense.”

“Oh, there were drops in the pricing of some things. Housing is a major example. Food and fuel on the other hand were pulled higher by demand side economics, more commonly called Keynesian economics which focus on demand. When demand outstrips supply, prices rise. We’re going to see a whole lot of that from now on. There may or not be any excess housing that is usable, depending upon location. Food demands will far outstrip supply.”

“But, I understood you planned on cutting the herds.”

“You heard correctly. In my view, we’ll be lucky to feed a reduced herd. The contents of those 4 grain silos won’t last forever. If you could do me a favor, would you let everyone know that I what to have a meeting tomorrow night after supper.”

“What about?”

“Where we go from here. While you’re doing that, let everyone know that I expect them to carry a weapon all times. At the minimum, a pistol.”

“Will that be the main topic of the meeting?”

“Yes.”

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“If I could have your attention, please, Gunny and I want to outline necessary steps that must be taken in the near term. While the level of stock on farm is being reduced, we will still have herds. Livestock is food and people are going to get hungry and start looking around for food sources. The group of five homes here, about 2 miles from the ranch is our first line of defense along the road. I’ll let Gunny explain the next part.”

“Thanks Jon. Ok, in addition to the static defense the homes represent, we’re going to raise a small Cavalry unit. They will be equipped much the same as the old fashioned Cavalry was equipped, .45 Colt revolvers and .45-70 rifles. Except, the rifles will be Marlin 1895 Cowboy rifles, not Trapdoor Springfield Carbines. And, since the Native

Americans showed they had what it took at Little Bighorn, we intend to employ Native Americans as troopers.

“We will be employing Tohono O'odham from the Reservation. We will start small, with a patrol of two starting every hour to circle the four sections. We will supply mounts, tack, weapons and radios. We will also bring in traditional foods because they've been shown to overcome the problems the Tohono O'odham have with obesity and type II diabetes. We hope that the arrangements are in place within a week.”

“Thanks Gunny. Any questions before I continue?”

“Will we be providing uniforms?”

“No. They will be wearing regular clothes, probably jeans and work shirts plus jackets depending on the weather. We don't want them to look like guards, just cowhands.”

“Why not some Vaqueros?” (Mexican cowboys, not the handgun.)

“Personal prejudice.”

“Do we have enough SAA revolvers, the Cavalry model, and 1895s?”

“We do. I ordered 40 sets that came in just before the war. They're stored in the bunker. Speaking of the bunker, for those of you who are unaware, there is more than just ammo stored in the bunker. In addition to the ammo, there are all kinds of grenades. We have both 40x53mm belted grenades and 40x46mm loose grenades plus offensive, defensive, two types of incendiary, and all colors of smoke. Nothing classified as non-lethal or less-lethal. We also have 66mm rockets, the LAW rocket used in Vietnam. The ones we have are actually left over from Vietnam. Finally, we have machineguns in 7.62x51mm, .50BMG and 40mm.”

“Are we going to receive training?”

“Everyone will be trained by the end of the week on all weapons we have.”

“What if we want something different?”

“For example?”

“A Winchester 94 in .45 Colt or perhaps a Marlin 1894 in .44 magnum?”

“We will consider requests and make one shopping trip. Anything not on the shopping list won't be sought. However, if we run into both 1894Cs and 1894s, we'd probably take both and all the ammo we can find. If any of you ladies seriously want an 1895, let me know because I want to see you shoot one.”

“You don’t think we can?”

“I’m sure you can; I seriously doubt many would want one for a fulltime firearm.”

When All Else Fails – Chapter 10

“Then why choose that caliber?”

“The .45 Colt and the .45-70 are black power cartridges from around 1873 as is the .44-40 Winchester. Colt introduced the Frontier Six-Shooter in .44-40 as a companion revolver for the Winchester ’73 rifle. The emphasis is black powder, usually pushing a lead bullet. We have primers, Pyrodex black powder substitute and plenty of wheel weights and molds for all calibers. It’s a just in case measure since I doubt we’ll run out of modern rifle or pistol cartridges for a long time.

“Carrying a rifle on a horse is more easily accomplished with lever action rifles with tubular magazines. We don’t have any Savage 99s and Winchester isn’t building any lever actions this year so we had to make do. The .45-70 is a bit more of a man stopper than the .45 Colt. Besides, I bought 40 of the 1894s in .45 Colt, just in case. And all the ammo I could get shipped to Tucson in the time available. They’re all full power loads, not cowboy loads.

“Now since SASS advocates would throw a hissy fit if I left them out, I got 40 side hammer coach guns in twelve gauge, another black powder load. And a large order of Mag-Tec 12 gauge 2½” brass shotgun shells that Gunny will have to load. Sorry Gunny, couldn’t find loaded brass shells.”

“S’allright. Get the powder, wads and shot?”

“You bet.”

“We’re all going to end up looking like Pancho Villa. You got bandoleers, right?”

“Yep, Kirkpatrick and they cost. Fifteen rounds of 12 gauge, 12 rounds of .45-70 and 18 rounds of .45 Colt.”

“Gunbelts?”

“The Laredoan (1914), Colt .45, tan, plain, no Conchos, 24 cartridge loops.”

“Size?”

“Anywhere from 34” to 38”, five holes; middle hole is 36”.”

“Scabbards?”

“Forty. They’ll hold the 1895 but are really intended for the 1894.”

“Do we have enough horses and tack?”

“See if you can get them to supply their own. We’ll pay an extra \$25 a week if they do. But we do have enough, barely. Any more questions, anyone?”

“Do we have to fire all the guns?”

“Yes, no exceptions. You will be allowed a weapon of your choosing within limits in 6.8 SPC or 7.62 NATO. Handguns will be 9mm or .45acp. Backup handguns are optional but those two calibers and .380 are preferred.”

“What if we don’t have a backup?”

“Add it to the shopping list. If we can’t get what you want, we may have to choose .32acp with whichever ammo feeds the best. Some don’t like the hollow point rounds. There will be not charge for the weapons; we’ll be salvaging guns and ammo.”

At least no one said we’d be looting. To loot is to take something from the possession of the owner, usually by force. To salvage is to recover actual abandoned property and scavenging is to go through trash looking for anything of value. We didn’t need to loot, everyone has a price.

I was relatively certain that we could buy back some of the horses we sold, for a premium, if we really needed them. I had decided to value gold at \$2,500 an ounce and silver at \$50 an ounce, maintaining the 50:1 ration shown on the face of the Eagles. However, those \$10 Eagles were a quarter ounce and they’d be valued at \$625 regardless of the face value.

While Gunny lined up the Tohono O’odham Cavalry, I took the shopping list with Tom to help and we did our best to get everything on the list. I had intended that the list only included firearms and ammo, but feminine hygiene products had a prominent place on the list. We simply took whatever we could find, everything from tampons to pads to panty liners. All told, we did well on firearms, getting everything on the list plus extras. There were more cowboy loads than full power loads and we took all we could find. The same applied to powders and primers of all types and we hooked up to a U-Haul and took it home. We dropped the trailer near the bunker, hurriedly unloaded the pickup and returned to finishing collecting the last bit of reloading supplies.

Since the trailer wasn’t full, we hit Costco stores until we had all of the coffee we had room for. Tom was collecting flashlight batteries both alkaline and rechargeable together with bulbs.

I stopped by a Radio Shack and tried to pick up a few coils of enameled copper wire, for a planned alarm system. Radio Shack stopped being Radio Shack about 20 years ago. Now it's anything but a radio shack. My plan was to string a long thin enameled wire around the entire perimeter, attaching to a string of barbed wire. Where the fences were wood, I'd fill the spaces between the wood with barbed wire. The enameled wire would be strung on our sided of the barbed wire.

I wanted to use a thin wire, 24 gauge or smaller like 26 or 28. Anyone cutting the barbed wire would also cut the enamel wire breaking a circuit and sounding the alarm. A quick scan of the perimeter with the Steiner 20x80 binoculars would identify the area and our Cavalry could ride to the rescue. We checked several firms that rewound motors with little success as none had small gauge wire.

Gunny was home later but it was worth the wait. He had 32 people ages 18 to 22 signed on. All had had horses so I dug out my list of auction purchasers and he and I hooked up a 6 horse trailer and went shopping. It took all day to repurchase 6 horses with gold. It didn't cost any more in that I received due to increase the value of gold. We ended up repurchasing 28 horses, give each trooper two mounts and leaving us with some of our own.

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They arrived early Monday morning pulling six six-horse trailers. The old, long unused bunk house which slept 40 was clean with fresh linen on the bunks. Their food was stocked in the kitchen. A Tohono O'odham woman was there to discuss cooking, also acting as dorm boss and domestic, making beds and changing linen weekly. Gunny had asked her how much it would take to get her to accept the job. She gave a figure and insisted on separate quarters.

Gunny pointed out that the bunkhouse and a separate bedroom with a private bath and locks on both doors. She drove over to look and saw Jimbo's empty trailer.

"What about that empty trailer?"

"Private property; owned by the Ranch foreman."

"If I can use it, you have a deal."

"Ok, hold on. Jimbo, got your ears one?"

"This is Jimbo."

"Jimbo, Gunny. Can I see you at your trailer ASAP?"

"Ten minutes."

“Jimbo, this Lady is Luzi, a Tohono O'odham woman I'm trying to hire as a bunkhouse manager, cook and domestic. I showed her the private Dorm Boss quarters. But she'd rather use you mobile home.”

“I don't see any problem with that but let me check with the boss. Marilyn, could I have a word with you?” He said as he walked out of earshot.

He walked back and said, “It'd ok on two conditions. One she keeps it clean and two, no male visitors. If she wishes a male visitor, she can use her room in the bunkhouse. Agreed?”

“Luzi?”

“Agreed.”

“Consider yourself hired and be here early Monday morning.”

“Ok if I come over Saturday night?”

“Sure, no problem.”

“Can I have Sunday's off? My husband is in poor health and I need to check on him.”

“You're married?” Jimbo asked. “In that case your husband can stay with you in the mobile home.”

“I'd still like part of Sunday off to go to church.”

“Agreed, we'll figure something out.”

“These young men you hired aren't going to be cowhands, are they?”

“No, mounted Cavalry, our security force for perimeter security. We have a group of 5 homes east of the ranch about 2 miles out. They'll be our first line of defense on the road.”

“You expecting trouble?”

“We have livestock and a rather large garden. There are seventeen of us at the moment including a newlywed couple. I sort of figure it will be 18 next year. My initial plan was to reduce our herds due to lack of grain. I'm in the process of rehashing that plan. We definitely needed more horses plus beef and pork will be worth their weight in gold, figuratively speaking.

“We have 1,680 acres of grassland not including our pasture and our pasture is another half section bringing the total to 2,000 acres. Although the only crop we raised in the past was alfalfa, we might consider raising corn, oats and barley.”

“Interesting Mr. DeSoto. See you on Saturday.”

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“You changed your mind on the livestock?”

“Maybe I was hasty. It won’t take long to rebuild the hog herd and about 2 years to rebuild the cattle herd to 150 breeding cows. Sure wouldn’t mind finding another bull to strengthen the bloodlines. If we could get a Charolaise to crossbreed with our Black Angus we could really improve our cattle herd.”

“You’d better talk that over with your father. The breeding lines of these cattle go back generations and they’ve never been crossbred. We have more than one chance back in the ‘70s when Charolaise began winning carcass prizes.”

“Dad, I’ve changed my mind about shrinking the herds and am of a mind to bring in a Charolaise bull to crossbreed the Black Angus.”

“You’ll do no such thing.”

“That’s what Jimbo said. Why?”

“Well, I’ll tell you. First off, none of our Angus have the recessive genes that produce the breed disorders, they’ve all been tested by the vet. Second, while we have never milked our Angus, the breed is considered to be both beef and dairy. Third, I know several owners with tested bulls for sale. Nothing wrong with expanding the Angus bloodline. This is one I’ll fight you over and you’ll have to win because you’ll only crossbreed over my dead body.”

“Why didn’t great grandpa, grandpa or you milk?”

“Didn’t want to. Thought about when they brought our those automatic milking systems where you wash the utter and the milk ends up in a stainless steel tank. Also thought about getting into making cheese. Who ever heard of Arizona cheese? It’s Wisconsin cheese followed by California cheese in terms of market share. Only cheese maker available, I could find locally, only made Mexican cheese. Dropped that idea like a hot rock. How big are you planning on growing the herd to?”

“Whatever the grass will support; somewhere between 100 and 150 head.”

“Hogs?”

"We'll go back up to 80."

"Well, with the available grass, it'll be 80 head of swine, 100 head of beef and how big of a horse herd?"

"Not over 100 head, probably about 75."

"You sure about bringing Tohono O'odham?"

"Something wrong with them?"

"I guess not, Ira Hayes was Akimel O'odham, also known as Pima. How many did you hire?"

"Thirty-two plus a combination dorm boss, cook and domestic. She and her husband will live in Jimbo's trailer."

"There's a private room in the bunkhouse."

"She didn't want it. The plan is to use a mounted patrol of two individuals with a pair leaving every hour to circle the perimeter. Everyone will be equipped with a .45 Colt and .45-70 rifle plus a handheld radio."

"Cowboy guns?"

"We have plenty of ammo in both calibers. I bought 40 sets including Colt SAA Cavalry models, Marlin 1894s in .45 Colt, 1895 in .45-70, and side hammer coach guns plus scabbards and good quality inexpensive holsters. As soon as we get them checked out on the weapons, we'll begin the patrols. It's sort of a mounted Cavalry."

"You have spare rides?"

"Yes sir. Gunny and I bought back 28 of the horses we sold, mostly 5-8 years old."

"They're good horsemen, the Tohono O'odham. Have, had, a rodeo every year."

"They're young Dad, 18 to 22 and from our first experiences, eager as all get out. Many brought their own rifles and revolvers. We'll store those in the bunkhouse armory and issue the new weapons. Get the new weapons sighted in and broken in. Gunny can reload the ammo to factory specs."

"You understand my position on crossbreeding the cattle?"

"The same applies to the horses and hogs?"

"Yep, Quarter horses and York's. Go do your thing."

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“Do we really have to fire all of the weapons?”

“Yes Anne, there will be no exceptions. Do you plan on sticking with your 6.8 SPC and Hi-Power?”

“Yes, plus my shotgun and the Walther. You really expect everyone to be armed at all times?”

“Yes, except when they’re taking a bath, shower or sleeping. The weapons will still need to be close at hand. I think I’ll mount a gun rack above the headboard and one near each bathroom door. I have two dozen Tac-Force Chest rigs. They’re versatile and a heavy duty chest rig with four mags pouches, two utility pouches and a large map pocket. The mag pouches will fit all common assault rifle magazines, 8 for the 7.62 and 12 for the M-16 and clones. You can carry hand grenades in the utility pouches.”

“What about the Tac-50 mags?”

“I doubt they’d fit. The 7.62 magazines are right at 3” deep. The .50 BMG has a rim diameter of about 0.8” and an overall length of 5.45”. Maybe one of you ladies could sew up something to hold four single magazines plus two utility pouches using the Tac-Force chest rigs as a guide.”

“We’ll give it shot and make one. If it works to your satisfaction, we’ll make one for Gunny and one for Daddy.”

“Thank you. Now, I’ll go see about getting a permanent OP on the barn roof. We need some of that heavy duty Lexan and armor plate.”

“Right, you can get both at a junkyard. Get serious.”

“TOM had Damon and we’ve got Gunny; where there’s a will there’s a way.”

“Damon had TOM to generate the idea and Derek to tell him where to look. Who is your Derek?”

“I think maybe one of the Tohono O’odham, Luzi.”

“The cook?”

“Yep.”

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Now, I didn't expect Luzi to go looking for armor plate or Lexan. I expected she knew which of our new employees might know where to get it. The structure I had in mind wouldn't be 100% protection, nothing is. I wanted it to be able to stand up to .50 caliber fire. If that meant 6" of Lexan, so be it. The APIT .50BMG cartridge weighed 1718 grams or ~4 ounces. The Mk 211 weighed 1765 grams or slightly more than the APIT. Both would pierce armor. The Mk 211 was rated at 11mm and the APIT at slightly less. Eleven mm of RHA was ~1/2" and more is better, right? Barrett says their rifles can penetrate 1" of RHA.

Unanswered was the issue of how thick the transparent armor had to be and what material we would use. Gunny to the rescue, the primary version of the Modular Gunner Protection Systems (MGPS) is commonly known as Marine Corps Transparent Armor Gun Shields (MCTAGS) made by BAE Systems. Transparent Aluminum? I think I saw that Star Trek Movie, they needed a whale tank and had to settle for Plexiglas. What the hell, everyone had a Dick Tracy wrist radio (cell phone) so why not transparent aluminum armor.

We'd just build the whole structure out of transparent aluminum armor and paint the inside bottom half dark brown or maybe add MultiCam. Better still, maybe we could find one-way transparent aluminum armor and do the MultiCam on the bottom of the outside. Access would be through the bottom of the OP from the barn loft. Which reminds me, we need tunnels between the house basements to access the shelter. Thanks Jerry!

You know, maybe we should actually put a tunnel from the shelter all the way to the Ranch. Build some forms and pour rectangular sections and once the trench was open and they were cured, set them in place with tar sealing the seams. Jerry wrote about it and TOM copied Jerry, if I recall correctly. I can always look it up; I have both of their CDs.

Gunny and I discussed it and decided that the tunnel should be one section behind the basements and each should have some kind of blast door. Road plate seemed appropriate and he could get transparent aluminum armor at Yuma. He said he'd get 3 of the guard force to help him on the trip to Yuma. They'd leave at 3:10pm. What is there about *3:10 to Yuma* that's nagging me? Oh well...

"I didn't have to ask the cook. Gunny suggested transparent aluminum armor. He's going to see if they can get some the Yuma Marine Corps base. Do we have and MultiCam cloth?"

"I have a full bolt, why?"

"Well, I was going to open an access to the OP from the barn loft and construct the OP using transparent aluminum armor. We could wrap the lower half in MultiCam. We'll need at least 4 yards and more likely 8."

“Honey, you’ve been reading too much PAW fiction. You’re starting to sound like TOM and Jerry.”

“Why thank you. I’ll take that as a complement.”

“It wasn’t.”

“Anyway, we’re going to construct some forms and pour three sided rectangles open on the bottom and run them from the last house to ours. They’ll be shelter access tunnels. We can use road plate or maybe some of the transparent aluminum armor as blast doors. We’ll use tar to seal any seams. Oh, Gunny suggested they be one section behind the basement walls and we’ll use a section to connect the basement wall to the tunnel.”

“Where are you going to get the concrete?”

“We’ll borrow it and they can have it back when we no longer need it.”

“Ok, will you be looting, salvaging or scavenging?”

“I think maybe salvaging. Yep that’s the correct definition.”

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Three weeks later, the tunnel connected the other four homes to the shelter and they had transparent aluminum armor blast doors, two inches thick. The locks on the doors were activated by the ever present Stanley Garage door openers. The doors were covered with entertainment centers on rollers and if you moved the right book, it pulled the pin holding the cabinet in place. A back bar with sliding lamps would have been nice, but... Which book? A hardcopy of Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*.

A hole had been cut in the backside of the barn roof beginning with the beams in the peak. The transparent aluminum armor had been drilled, with difficulty and a 6’ square box 8’ long had been constructed using angle iron in the inside corners. The roof was also transparent aluminum armor held in place in the same fashion. The floor, which was 7’ below the roof, was a triple layer of ¾” plywood with a hatch in one back corner. The lower 4’ of OP was wrapped in MultiCam which had been cut to fit because of the slope of the barn roof. The cloth was glued in place and the cut section added directly above where it had been cut from. It looked sort of strange...

“Gunny, I’ve been meaning to ask you. What’s the significance of *3:10 to Yuma*?”

“You didn’t see the movie?”

“That’s it. Heard of the movie but I didn’t see it.”

“What are we going to do next? Extend the tunnel along that string of houses all the way to the Ranch?”

“I think so, one house at a time. It will probably take us a year to cast all the sections, dig the trench and install the connecting section to the houses, cut the holes for the blast doors and so forth. We’ll skip one house for now and start at the next. I don’t want to compromise security. If we don’t do it that way, we’ll have an open tunnel inviting anyone into our five homes. We’ll put in one section in our direction so we can install the connecting section and proceed.”

“Just what in Hell does Tohono O’odham mean?”

“I thought you knew Gunny. The direct translation, according to Luzi, is ‘desert people’. The tribe covered southern Arizona and northern Mexico before the Gadsden Purchase. There are three bands of the O’odham including the Akimel O’odham, ‘river people’ aka Pima and the unrecognized group the Hia C-ed O’odham ‘sand dune people’. When the US bought the Gadsden Purchase they put a national boundary through the heart of the Tohono O’odham lands. It didn’t mean much for a long time until the US government began enforcing the border.”

“They should be happy now; I think the government has more on its mind than enforcing international borders.”

“Did you set up a rotation for the OP?”

“From the security force? No, should I?”

“Yes. If we need to hire more just for that, do it. We have four rigs left so you can hire four more and add them to the patrol rotation. You can do what you want, but I think we would want short shifts in the OP... say two hours. If you need it, you can take one of my MUNS.”

“Don’t need it. I picked up another at Yuma with a scope and a rail to mount both on. I sort of figured the question of night vision would come up.”

“You’re anticipating me. Good, I get wrapped up in things and lose track.”

“Have to. You have as many guns as I do and way more money. Hell, even your knife is bigger than mine. All I have is the Marine Corps fighting knife, the OKC3S Marine Corps Bayonet and a Randall model 2 8” Fighting Stiletto. That San Mai III Laredo Bowie is 16” long! I don’t have you out gunned despite the size of my armory. Besides, I know a good deal when I see it. We’ll have enough people soon to really protect our hides.”

Gunny didn’t have any problem recruiting more people. We had 8 empty bunks and he filled them all. We could probably hire more if push came to shove and add bunks to the dorm boss’ room. However, I only bought 40 sets of revolvers, rifles and coach guns, so

before we hired anyone else, we'd have to go shopping. And, if I had to go shopping for more guns and ammo, I'd be looking for M1As, Glock pistols and Mossberg 590A1 shotguns in addition to more cowboy guns.

When All Else Fails – Chapter 11

Despite my desire to have our own Cavalry Troop, function overcame form and we could just as easily equip our force with modern firearms when we had enough. It meant going to Prescott and dealing with Davidson's, Inc. directly. Who? Heard of Gallery of Guns? That's them, Davidson's, Inc. If you've ever been on their website, you've seen 'allocated'. That doesn't mean they don't have it, it just means that someone has first dibs. I figured a little shiny yellow metal might change their minds. It was worth a try.

They had 7 standards, 10 loadeds, 5 national match, 2 CA standard, 3 CA loadeds and 1 CA M-21, a total of 28. Add those to our dozen loaded and we had 40 rifles. They only had 22 590A1s but plenty of 870Ps. Glock 21s by the dozens and nearly as many Glock 30s. There was only one person there and I'm totally certain he was an employee because he accepted the price I offered on every weapon we wanted. Even more suspicious was him accepting the \$2,500 per ounce value I put on the gold and \$50 an ounce on silver.

"Gunny, could you help me unload the pickup?"

"Whatcha got?"

"I picked up some modern firearms from Davidson's in Prescott. You can replace the muzzle brakes on the California models with those extra flashhiders with the bayonet lugs."

"All right! You didn't get all 590A1s?"

"Got all they had and filled in with 870 Police models. Six of the rifles are good enough for Designated Marksman rifles, the M-21 and the 5 national matches."

"Fair enough. I'll run each of the men through a course of fire with the M-21 and pick the 6 best as Designated Marksmen. Then I pull them off duty and do a little training. What about the tunnel?"

"I'll put that cap we poured over the end and backfill."

"I thought we wanted to run it all the way to the Ranch."

"We do, but security gets the highest priority."

"Do we want to replace the Colt and Marlins with the Glocks and M1As?"

“Issue the new weapons but have the patrols carry the cowboy guns. Anyone doing a recon on us will get the wrong impression. If we have an event, the responders can take the patrols their modern weapons.”

“Sneaky. You should have been a Marine.”

“I basically was a Marine, if you think about it.”

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We paid in a combination of food and precious metals. Each of 40 security employees received enough food for 4 people for each day worked plus the equivalent of a roll of silver dimes, 3.575 ounces, for each day worked. A roll of silver dimes was \$5 face value or 0.005 of \$1,000 face value and \$1,000 face value held ~715 ounces of silver. We were paying right at 25 ounces for a 7 day work week and they got one day off in 14 to take the food and silver home.

We had a large amount of junk silver in dimes, quarters and halves plus silver Eagles and they could choose the form of payment. Dimes were 50 to the roll, \$5 face; quarters were 40 to the roll, \$10 face; and, halves were 20 to the roll, \$10 face. Although we didn't use the silver dollars, they were 20 to the roll, \$20 face. However, you couldn't value them the same way as the smaller coins. Each Silver dollar contained .7734133 ounces so a roll was 15.468266 ounces. The other calculation, $20 \div 1,000 \times 715$ would produce a result of 14.3 ounces which wouldn't represent the ounces of silver in a \$20 roll of Silver dollars. People talked about it, but never explained. So, I figured it out and left the above explanation for posterity.

The wage was considered top dollar and appropriate considering the risk related to the job. Gunny installed a Leupold Mk 4 variable power scope on the M-21 I'd brought back from Prescott. Four days later he had six individuals selected for DM training and need more Mk 4s. Three days later, he had the six shooting better than 95% at 800 meters and 85% at 1,000 meters.

The security force was informed of the changes being implemented and were informed that they all had to be shooting better than 80% at 600 meters with scoped equipped M1As. Unable to acquire additional Trijicon ACOGs with or without BDCs, Gunny settled on an inexpensive model, allowing for 3 sighting systems, the riflescopes, the red dot sights and the iron sights.

We had barely gotten the security force up to speed on the M1As, riot guns and Glock pistols when a patrol radioed in that they'd signs of a small group having tried to herd three steers to the fence. By the time they'd reached the cattle, the trespassers had jumped the fence and were out of sight. The observer picked them up on horses riding away at a full gallop.

"I think the decision to maintain roving patrols at intervals seemed to work out."

"Doc, the only reason for that was those three failed to scout out the situation."

"I'm open to suggestions."

"Stagger the patrols rather than having them leave at set intervals. A patrol circuit takes ~ 2½ hours, at 4 miles per hour, meaning we have six people out at a time. I think we should go with 12 people and vary the starting times from 25 minutes to 35 minutes. That will still leave a sizable Cavalry troop to respond to incursions."

"It's worth a shot, go ahead and implement it. You're our Chief of Security so implement any changes you think necessary and just keep me informed."

"Does that mean I get a raise?"

"Ten percent."

"Ha, ha, funny, 110% of zero is zero."

"George, we provide food, fuel, water and you don't have any bills. Under the circumstances, I think that's just compensation."

"I was joking."

"I know, I wasn't. However if you can find 40 additional MUNS and the same number of 7.62 Surefire suppressors, I'll pay for them in gold."

"Anything else?"

"All the A-MAX you can find in military calibers."

"Jesus H. Christ, you want MORE ammo?"

"All you can get. We can always build a second bunker. We have been noticed and those who noticed us got away clean. If we could do it, I'd install a high voltage fence surrounding all four sections."

"Don't get carried away."

I was only half serious with Gunny; we had enough ammo and reloading supplies. And, we were running out of space to build any more buildings or bunkers. I seriously doubted he could find additional MUNS or Surefire 7.62 suppressors. Moreover, I wasn't sure the Surefire adapters would fit the SR-556 in either caliber. It would give him something to do over and above managing the security force. I knew for a fact that if he

had to buy the MUNS and the Surefire suppressors, the farm corporation would need to supply the funds.

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“There ya go, 40 MUNS, 40 7.62 Surefire suppressors and one suppressor for every SR-556, in appropriate calibers. You owe me one hundred ounces of gold.”

“How did you do that?”

“Pay first and then I’ll explain.”

One hundred ounces of gold at the prevailing rate was a cool quarter million. I consulted Dad and gave Gunny 100 Eagles.

“Now, how’d you do it? And, where did you get the gold to buy ‘em?”

“I stole them... that should answer both questions. The hundred ounces of gold was compensation for my trouble since I’m slightly under paid. One of the last 8 guys I hired was an armorer and can install everything.”

“Just how much do you want to be paid?”

“My staff is paid 25 ounces of silver per week I’ll settle for 30 if you don’t call me Judas. Otherwise, one gold Eagle per week plus 5% of the profits reduced by my pay.”

“That’s quite mercenary of you.”

“Sticks and stones; I have a family to provide for.”

“It’s likely that your pay will outstrip your 5%.”

“Fine, so be it.”

“Ok, we have a deal. I should make it retroactive and not pay for what you stole.”

“Total separate Jon and you know it. The adapters will fit the SR-556s. I actually have several extra adapters and matching suppressors. However I only found 42 FA762K suppressors. Whatever you do, don’t go to LA, they took a hit on the harbor, one downtown and a third in the Valley.”

“How big of a dose did you get?”

“Twenty-five Rads. Did you agree to the 30 pieces of silver or the ounce of gold?”

“One gold Eagle per week, offset against 5% of the profits. You saved my butt a time or two, you know. You should also realize that just because the radiation is at a so called safe level, we are still being exposed to a level well above normal background.”

“I do buddy, that’s why I want something set aside for Rachael and Anne.”

The armorer installed the FA adapters to all of the rifles that didn’t already have a suppressor, installed each set of sights and used a laser bore sight before issuing/returning the firearms. Each person spent time on the range sighting in their new/modified weapons. It was none too soon.

“This is the OP; I have a horse mounted group cutting the wire on the north side, about halfway down the pasture.”

“Roger. This is Gunny. Saddle up and take the modern arms in addition to your regular carry rifles and revolvers. Backups take the modern weapons for the guy they are backing up. Move, now!”

“Women and children to the shelters,” I added.

I intended that Mom and Dad take to their shelter and our wives and children move to our shelter and lock it down. I armed myself with my Tac-50 and M-21 with all the loaded magazines I had and drove to the scene. By the time I arrived, a pitched battle was ensuing. Everyone was dismounted and the horses had distanced themselves from the battle. I spotted Gunny and headed towards his position.

“How many?”

“Close to fifty went they started. It’s down by half at the moment.”

“Our guys?”

“We have some WIA, but no KIAs, so far.”

“It looks like the rustlers are pulling out.”

“They’re trying to. They just expose themselves and we’re taking them out one by one. Our guys took the training to heart but this grass only provides concealment, not cover.”

I stripped off my scope and replaced with the ACOG to match Gunny’s actions. The battle slowly faltered and our security forces rounded up the wounded.

“Gunny, what do you want to do with these guy?”

“Jon?”

“Collect their weapons and ammunition and send them home, on foot.”

Gunny passed the word and the security forces made it happen.

“Some of those people were in a bad way. I doubt they’ll make it home.”

“To paraphrase Clark Gable, *frankly Gunny, I don’t give a damn*. Those with light wounds will make it back and spread the word that we protect what we have with a large security force. That’s good advertising.”

“Coming from a former Corpsman, that’s cold.”

“Yep.”

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Gunny was right, it was cold. While I might have Corpsman and Paramedic skills, I was now a rancher with a four section spread and had over 55 people depending on my decisions and actions. We gave the all clear and our people gathered the arms, ammunition, knives and whatnot. They dug a slit trench using the backhoe and rolled the bodies into the mass grave.

The firearms were an eclectic collection. It contained an assortment of MBRs, ARs, hunting rifles, shotguns and handguns. The guns were emptied, cleaned and stored along with any remaining ammo. On average, they had 13 magazines for each MBR or AR and 5 per pistol. The single action revolvers ran from Colt to Ruger to Cimarron (Uberti). Several were in .45 Colt, but there were .357 and .44 magnums. The final count was 83 weapons, all functional.

Anne and I tended to our WIA and all would recover... in time. The most difficult guy to treat had taken a load of #6 birdshot to his chest and right arm. Lead pellets, so we had to find and remove every pellet. We essential self-insured and our WIA were on full pay while they recovered. It went a long way towards establish group cohesiveness.

The next event we heard about was the presence of the ANG in Tucson. We discussed the merits of going to them or letting them come to us. We choose the latter. I can only guess that some of the surviving rustlers let it be known that we had herds of cattle and hogs. Gunny and I starched a set of BDUs and stood by our homes waiting for the Abrams.

They didn’t arrive in Abrams; they arrived in unarmored HMMWVs. That was their first mistake. The First Lieutenant asked who was in charge and I advised him I was. I went on to say I’d been out of the Navy for a long time and Gunny was retired with 20 years plus a 50% medical retirement.

“Are you here to deliver Gunny’s back pay, Lieutenant?”

“Not at all. We’re here to arrange collection of your herds to feed the Tucson survivors.”

Gunny spoke into his radio, “Code Red at the houses.”

“Collect, Lieutenant? I don’t think so. Purchase our market ready stock, perhaps. But collect, there’s no way on God’s green earth you’re going to collect anything.”

“I have a Platoon of soldiers that say otherwise.”

“Is that all? You’d need a Company or two if you plan to follow that route.”

Gunny nudged me. I looked and he nodded.

“What do you mean by a Company or two?”

I nudged Gunny and he spoke into his radio, “Now.”

“Look around you Lieutenant and tell me what you see.”

“A group of people with rifles pointed at us. You have your own Army?”

“A small security force. This isn’t the entire group; some are recovering from their wounds received at the hands of a bunch of rustlers. We didn’t kill the surviving rustlers so I can only presume you heard about us from some of them. Do you intend to rustle our stock Lieutenant? We don’t hang rustlers anymore, we just shoot them.”

“Now see here, I have the full backing of the President and countless Executive Order 10998.”

“I don’t care what authority you have. If you take our breeding herds and slaughter them what are you going to do after that? I will sell you live beef for \$2.25 a pound and live swine for \$2.00 a pound, in gold at \$2,500 per ounce.”

“I’ll be back.”

“See you later, Arnold. Ok Gunny, stand them down.”

“Apparently neither you nor the Lieutenant noticed that all of the adults in our five homes had the Lieutenant covered too.”

“No, I didn’t; my attention was on the Lieutenant. Look, I’ve had a change of thought. Resume the tunnel starting at the Ranch. I’ll show you where I want it. There’s that small area near the front... it’s about 10 acres. Know the one I mean?”

“I think so.”

“Now, start in the very center of that area and run a tunnel straight south until you intersect the line for the tunnel connecting our homes. Make the turn there and excavate the tunnel all the way to our blocked off tunnel, connecting each home as you go.”

“Then what?”

“Cheryl’s father had a monolithic dome, right?”

“And you want him to construct one on the Ranch?”

“Yes, a big one, maybe 100’ radius.”

“Are you nuts? That would be 100’ tall and have a dozen stories.”

“Only ten and the tenth would be for the mechanicals like elevator controls, cable spools and such. I’ve have it built with a basement, also 10’ deep.”

“The main floor would have about 31 thousand square feet!”

“Thirty-one thousand four hundred fifteen square feet gross, thirty thousand seven hundred ninety net, allowing for a 1’ thick dome. It would have a volume in excess of 2 million cubic feet (2,032,130ft³) not counting the basement. The basement would add another two hundred seventy seven thousand one hundred and eight cubic feet (277,108ft³), assuming floor thicknesses of 1’ for a total of two million three hundred and nine two hundred thirty eight cubic feet (2,309,238ft³).”

“Are there that many survivors in Tucson?”

“I don’t know. Besides, I’m only thinking of the residents of the Ranch and this strip of 48 homes.”

“I think you lost me somewhere.”

“Well, TOM has a thing for Intentional Communities. Generally, they start dragging in mobile homes, as needed. There are 48 houses in this string and only five of them are occupied.”

“Is that where you’re going? Starting an Intentional Community from a string of empty houses?”

“It was a thought, yes. However, considering the numbers I just quoted, I have to do some figuring. Maybe a one hundred foot radius is too big.”

“Try it at a 50’ radius and you’ll know whether to make it bigger or smaller.”

"I will. See you later, I'd better check on Anne."

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"Gunny said you had my back, your SR-556 in 6.8?"

"Your Tac-50 loaded with MK 211."

"Oh, ouch. I think that Lieutenant may be a problem. I told Gunny to start extending the tunnel from the Ranch to the homes. I've been thinking about that monolithic dome Cheryl's father built."

"But, we've had 3 disasters, the economy, Yellowstone and the war."

"I know, but I have this gutting feeling we're in for more. What were you planning on for dinner?"

"I put a ham in the oven on low."

"Cure 81 or bone-in?"

"Bone-in. I thought we could get two or three meals from the ham and use the bone in a pot of white beans, using small white if you want bean soup or large white if you want beans."

"Sounds good. I'd like to make some calculations, if I have time."

"You have two hours."

So, I took Gunny's suggestion and calculated a 50' radius (49' net) dome. It would have a volume of 246,396 cubic feet plus a basement with an additional 67,855 cubic feet for a total of 312,281ft³. The area of the main floor would be 7,542ft² as would the basement. It would have five stories, four usable. I lacked the math skills to calculate the area of the four usable floors since each would have a decreasing radius and I didn't have a slide rule or know the formulas needed to make the calculations. For the sake of making some kind of calculation, I assumed each floor would be $\frac{3}{4}$ the size of the lower floor. The results were $7,542+7,542+5,656+4,242+3,181=28,163$ for the basement and first four floors. That would support 2,816 persons. I disregarded the volume for the moment and calculated for a 40' radius (39' net).

The main floor and basement would be 4,738ft² and the total would be $4,738+4,738+3,553+2,665=15,694$ ft². That would support ~157 people and since there were 49 residences including the Ranch and staff, an average of 3.2 persons per unit. That would be too small, considering the Ranch population. I also concluded that the radius should be in 10' multiples so each increase added one additional floor.

Assuming Walton Feeds' one year deluxe food supply was 33ft³ and a 10 year supply for each person, each person would require 330ft³ for food in addition to 100ft² of space. Much of the extra space in the 50' dome would be consumed by stored food, ordnance, munitions and other equipment. We could use the Ranch's generator and just move it to the dome's basement.

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The Lieutenant returned the next day with his Company commander. After introductions, I laid it all out for the Captain. While they could take all of our livestock, it would be a one-time deal. If they allowed us to bring the cattle to market weight, they'd get more meat overall.

"Is there anything we can do to help you increase your product?"

"Captain, we're using four sections. The area between our northern boundary and I-10 would increase our acreage to nearly double and would allow us to double production."

"Is it occupied?"

"Not that we know of. We can supply one steer per week when the cattle reach market weight. Since we have 124 breeding cows, we can supply at least 104 head starting next year. This year, we can supply 75 beef.

"Hogs are a different matter, eighty sows producing 2 liters per year at an average of 13 per liter, would allow us to market approximately 2,000 hogs per year. We'll have to increase our chicken flock to provide chicken and eggs. The beef will run you \$2.25 and the hogs \$2.00 a pound live weight. That's an average price of \$2,500 a head for the cattle and \$450 a head for the hogs.

"Next year, you'll be able to the same amounts of beef and pork and the following year at least 104 steers and the same 2,000 hogs. The terms are gold on the barrelhead valued at \$2,500 an ounce."

"I'll have to run it up the chain of command."

"We'll be here."

Two thousand hogs per year at an average weight of 225 pounds at \$2 per pound equaled ~\$900,000. Seventy-five steers at 1,250 pounds at \$2.25 per pound equaled ~\$211,000. If we increased our cow herd to 125 head, we could supply the 2 head a week to Tucson, year after next. The numbers were approximate because we still needed to eat. The prices might be a little on the high side, but we now had to deal with rustlers and pay for a security force.

Meanwhile construction of the tunnel continued and construction of the dome began. Before we could agree on the plans for the dome the principals have to all agree. We did build a dome, but it would have 3 underground stories with two above ground. Cheryl's father agreed to tackle the job if it could get the materials and the inflation bag. We helped him secure the materials and he got an inflation bag from somewhere in Texas.

When All Else Fails – Epilog

The military agreed to the contract to supply beef and pork plus chickens and eggs when they became available. We were also able to market flour, oatmeal, cornmeal and cracked barley. It took a full year to enclose the additional three and a fraction sections. When fuel became unavailable, the market for our riding horses picked up.

Dad died about four years later from a second heart attack and Mom about a year later. Anne, the children and I moved into the ranch house. George had the constitution of an ox and held on for ten years. Evelyn moved in with us until, she too passed.

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