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Managing Editor
LeAnn Driver

Creative Director
Celeste C. Bivin

Cover Design
Celeste C. Bivin

Contributing Writers

- Celeste C. Bivin
- Charlotte Clary
- LeAnn Driver
- Nikolas T. Monastere
- Anita Patriot
- Toomany O. Pressed
- Aaron M. Scullin
- Robert Stanley
- Liberty Steadfast
- Beverly Vines-Haines

Special Thanks To

- Zach Coco
- Joseph Fernandez
- Solomon Schwartz
- William Tarczy
- Stanley Troutman
- Pictures For Heroes

Dedicated To

R.L. Driver

Honorable Mention

Richard M. Higgenbottom III

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Letter from the Editor

Welcome to American Liberty Magazine!

As we excitedly launch our maiden voyage issue we invite you to take a break from the “fake news” media, the crosshairs of divisive political agendas, and the new “normal” where thought-police seek to censor the masses. At American Liberty Magazine we aim to provide our audience with informative, entertaining, and censorship-free American content. Our articles are for patriots, by patriots ... and we will never apologize for it!

Our writers bring unique expertise, humor, and a fearless love of our American Constitution to the foreground in this Freedom Over Fear issue. Reader’s can take a ride through the States and walk 1,000 miles in another man’s shoes with Nikolas Monastere in *Odyssey*. Take a deeper look into America’s underrated destinations in *Tucked Away*. Check out our *Prepper’s Corner* and *Beginning Food Storage* for guidance on how you can prepare your family for the worst while hoping for the best. Take a stand with *A Tale Of Tyranny* and enjoy a refreshing sit down with our favorite Grandmas in *Ask The Grannies*. Get inspired and travel through time in *Nation’s Greatest*. Give a proper introduction to your new best friend, the AR-15, with our *Modern Maverick* Robert Stanley. Show your teeth with our *Mama Bear* Anita Patriot and sink into some delicious apple spice cobbler with Aaron Scullin.

American Liberty Magazine was founded on the principle that all people have inalienable rights that cannot be infringed. Together we can remind the world that we all have some common ground, we all have something to fight for: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

I hope you enjoy reading. Hold the line. Let’s Go Brandon!

LeAnn Driver
Executive Editor

American Liberty Magazine, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 2022

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Contact us at (951) 595-7743 or Info@AmericanLibertyMagazine.com

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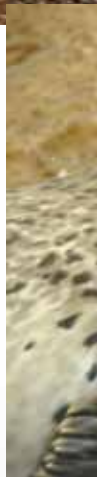
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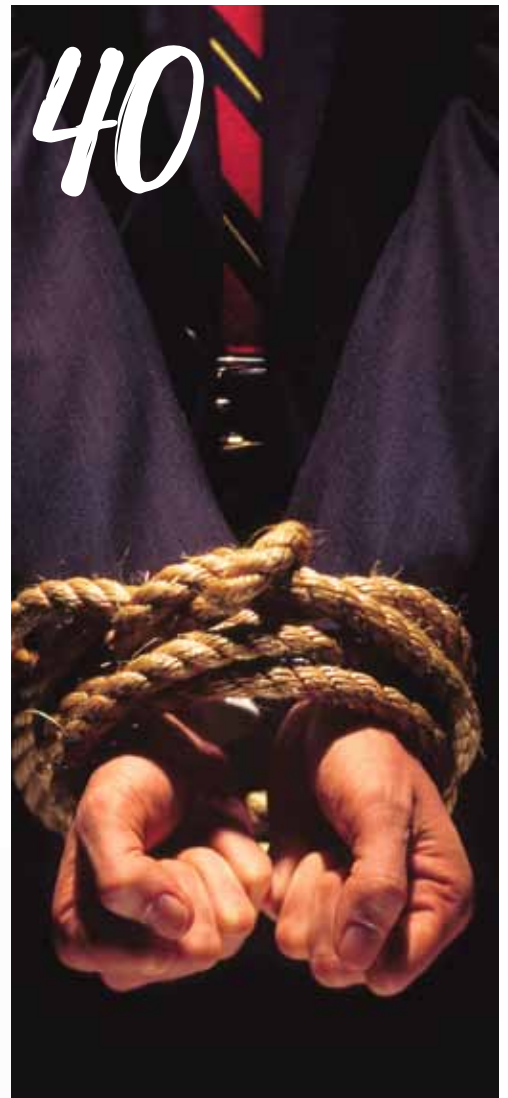
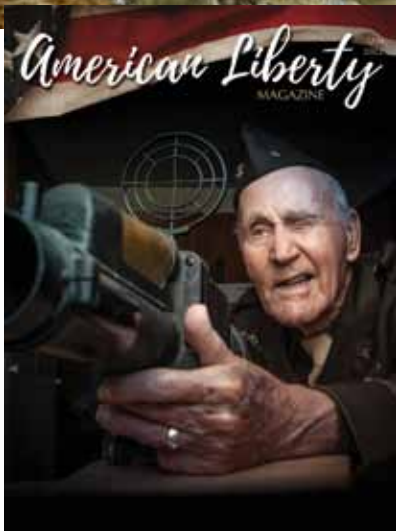
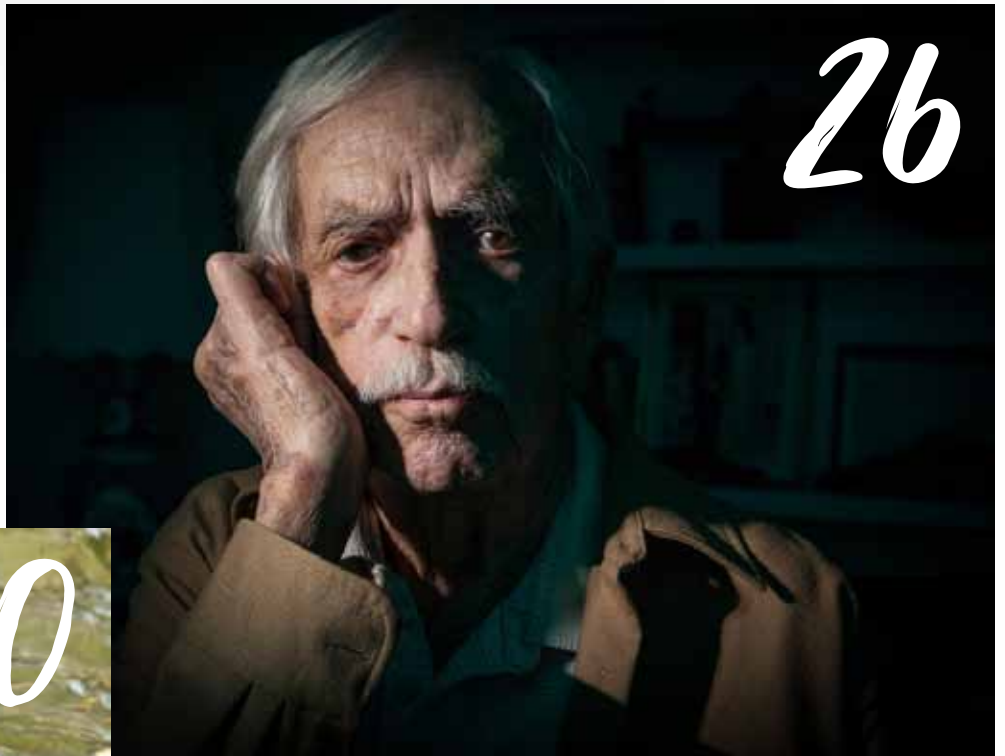
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On the Cover:
Stanley Troutman
War correspondent
Photo by Zack Coco

FOR PATRIOTS, BY PATRIOTS.

American Liberty


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Contact Us

(951) 595-7743

Tues - Sat 9:00am to 5:00pm PST

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www.AmericanLibertyMagazine.com

General Information

Info@AmericanLibertyMagazine.com

Write Our Editor

AttnEditor@AmericanLibertyMagazine.com

Advertising

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BEGINNING FOOD STORAGE



by Beverly Vines-Haines

Remember the food shortages during the first year of Covid? It wasn't just toilet paper. There were times we couldn't find flour, sugar, meat, and so much more. Once we made it through those rough times, we were warned it could happen again. And again. It would be comforting to know if stores run out of necessities, if the undeniable "supply chain" shortages get worse, we could feed our families and still maintain some semblance of normal life.

We've all seen excited preppers with huge gardens, full shelves of home canned food, dehydrated vegetables and fruit treats. Their freezers and pantries scream food security. But how do we start such an undertaking? Where do we begin?

The Covid situation exposed a frightening truth. America's love and expectation of packed grocery store shelves is no longer guaranteed. Whether by design or a perfect storm of poor planning, shortages are with us for the foreseeable future. Preppers have warned us for years we needed to break our dependence on a grocery industry that depends on trucking, warehousing and a gainfully employed population. People who are paid more to stay home and 'quarantine,' to live a hermit-like lifestyle, have little interest in maintaining their jobs.

The preppers are ready. But what about city dwellers, people with no land for a garden, no buckets filled with a rich harvest, no chickens free ranging in the back yard and blessing them with delicious fresh eggs? Don't worry. Non-preppers can do a lot to guard against shortages.

We don't need acreage to acquire a beginning level



of food security. We should purchase 25-pound bags of flour and sugar. Dried milk, preferably with an extended shelf life. Kids might complain but it's milk! Do online research for essential items. You will need a dedicated closet or storage area. If you plan to use items as you build your inventory, become proficient at rotating stock.

There are many books and schedules for food storage. Right now it's easy to look up specific items, charts for adequate planning and tips for shelf life limitations.

If I could have only one tool for preserving, I would choose a dehydrator. You don't need a garden to ensure hot and hearty vegetable soups on a cold winter night. Read grocery ads carefully. When frozen corn, peas and beans are on sale, buy several bags. Fill your dehydrator with these vegetables. Once the foods are dry, no moisture at all, store the dried veggies in glass jars with tight lids. These things keep a very long time. When needed, add a cup or more to your simmering soup or rehydrate in water to put in casseroles.



It doesn't have to be frozen food. You can buy onions, squash, and a lot of other produce, slice it and put it in the dehydrator. Before you know it, you will have the equivalent of weeks' worth of vegetables stored for your family. Does it rehydrate to the same quality of fresh? No. But close.

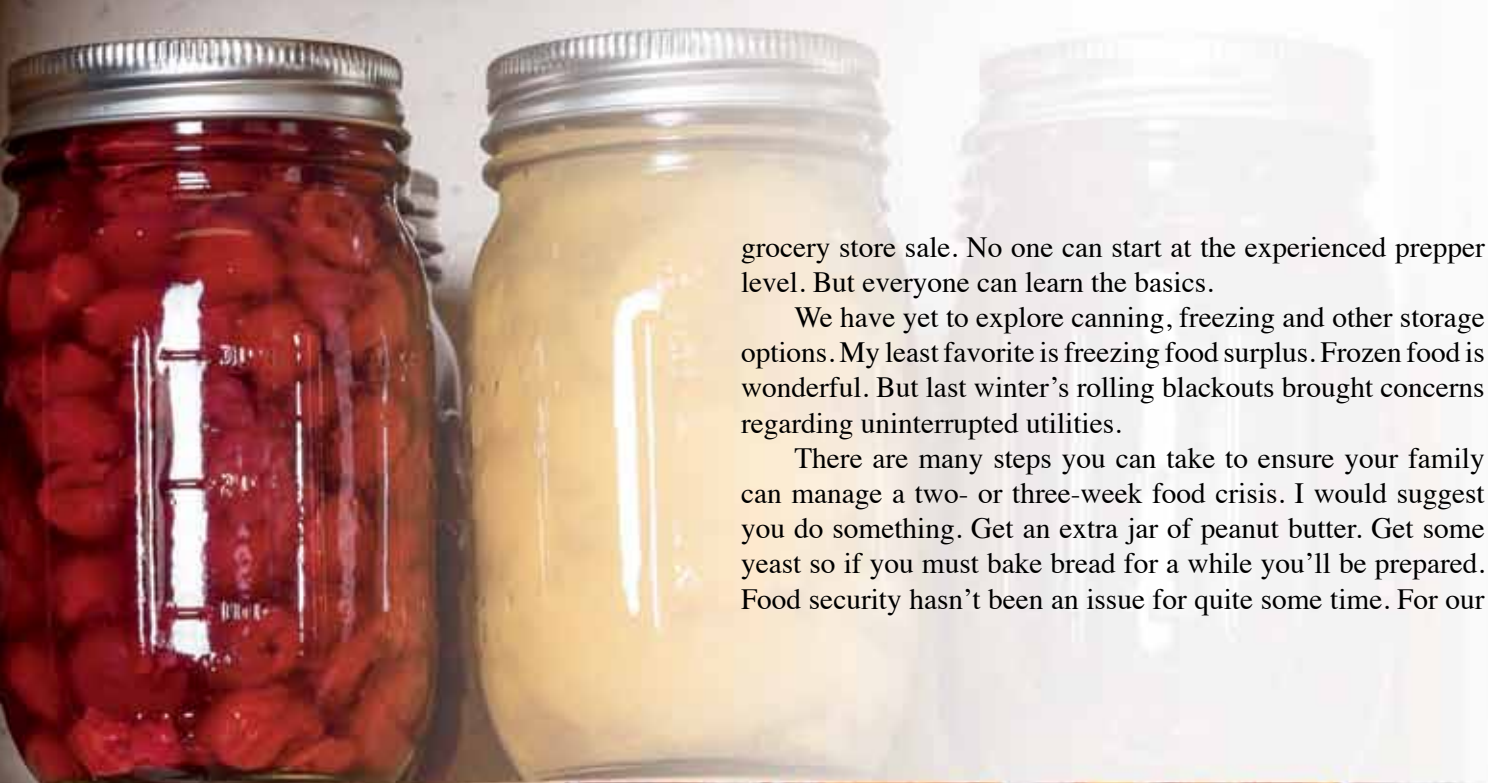
Make sure your dehydrator comes with instructions and ideas. Research online. You'll be amazed. You can make your own spices and make Jerky. You can boil thick broths from aging veggies in your refrigerator. Pour the broth on dehydrator sheets. Save the resulting powders as flavorings

for soups and other foods.

Make yummy fruit leathers for the kids. Or adults. Dehydrated foods take a minimum amount of shelf space. They store for a very long time. Make certain the food is truly dry and store it in airtight containers. Often those who are new to dehydrating compromise early projects to mold because they rushed the drying process.

True preppers waste nothing. They understand the circle of life at a deep, level. Food wastes feed chickens and pigs. Multiple processes can preserve a large garden harvest. Or bounty from a





grocery store sale. No one can start at the experienced prepper level. But everyone can learn the basics.

We have yet to explore canning, freezing and other storage options. My least favorite is freezing food surplus. Frozen food is wonderful. But last winter's rolling blackouts brought concerns regarding uninterrupted utilities.

There are many steps you can take to ensure your family can manage a two- or three-week food crisis. I would suggest you do something. Get an extra jar of peanut butter. Get some yeast so if you must bake bread for a while you'll be prepared. Food security hasn't been an issue for quite some time. For our



grandparents it was a way of life. I still envision a time when families have chickens and even a pig in the backyard. I love that life. Not everyone does.

Even if these shortages end when Covid ends, even if people get excited about going back to work, even if you never have to break into your stored foods, what do you have to lose? Take a chance. Get a dehydrator and store enough food you won't have to panic when the supply chain fails you. And trust me, it is failing businesses every day. And every failed business eventually touches you.

Don't Quit

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest if you must, but don't you quit.

Life is queer with its twists and turns,
As every one of us sometimes learns,
And many a fellow turns about
When he might have won had he stuck it out.
Don't give up though the pace seems slow –
You may succeed with another blow.

Often the goal is nearer than
It seems to a faint and faltering man;
Often the struggler has given up
When he might have captured the victor's cup;
And he learned too late when the night came down,
How close he was to the golden crown.

Success is failure turned inside out –
The silver tint in the clouds of doubt,
And you never can tell how close you are,
It might be near when it seems afar;
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit –
It's when things seem worst that you must not quit.

—John Greenleaf Whittier (1807 - 1892)



STATUS: UNVACCINATED

by LeAnn Driver

My best friend and I have matching tattoos. They're kind of a joke, a conversation piece if you will. (For the curious: If you're a *Friends* fan, it's the world from a great, great distance. If you're not a *Friends* fan, it's just a silly blue freckle.) We have known each other since we were 13. We've been through hell and back together, more than once. We've laughed for hours, sometimes without ever saying much of anything; the inside jokes run deep. We were the dynamic duo! It used to feel like nothing in the world could stand between us or against us. We rarely fought, but when we did we catalyzed growth in the other person, albeit sometimes painful. How much more could you ever ask of a person? It doesn't get much better, except for maybe when you find the right person to settle down with, but that's a story for another day...

My best friend lives in Los Angeles, California. He lives in a world where getting indiscriminately spit on is a regular danger, where traffic for 20 miles can last three hours, and where the rent is astronomically high, almost as high as people's expectations. Los Angeles is the single most mandated city in the United States when it comes to COVID (perhaps tied with New York). They still require masks indoors at all times. Their term "fully vaccinated" sometimes means an individual is required to have at least two, but sometimes four, COVID vaccines. The current mandate states that in order to enter an indoor public space those 18 years and older must show proof of vaccinations or negative test results within 72 hours. Businesses not abiding by the mandate are subject to hefty fines. There is a religious exemption for patrons per the mandate, but the business, subject to inspections, is held responsible for verifying validity and sometimes they don't want to risk it. The media falsely calls these strict mandates "laws;" always remember, **mandates are not laws**. Los Angeles County is, as I write this, attempting to change their mandate to include everyone five years and older to be vaccinated or tested.

I remember when our state went into lockdown in March 2020, even more-so because it was on my birthday. I'll never forget the photos of decorated rooms empty of the warmth and affection brought only by human beings. It was a terrifying and depressing reality. I gathered the day it happened that we'd be living in 1984 in no time, if we weren't already; lock-downs are un-American by nature. I think I wore a mask on less than a handful of occasions. I worked from home, I shopped from home, and I made my living room into a boredom-free zone which my toddler didn't mind at all. In my mind, I wasn't sheltering from a virus, I was sheltering from Big Brother and preparing for the clocks



to strike thirteen (1984, George Orwell...*Read it*).

When Trump announced his warp speed vaccine I can't say I was surprised but I was definitely disappointed. I have seen far too many vaccine injuries in my personal life to be trusting. Vaccine critics are not "anti-vaxxers"; practicing discernment with what we inject intravenously is not being anti-science, it's being scientific. Everything starts with a hypothesis and only becomes law when proven. Remember that. You've never known pain until you've had an allergic reaction to something injected into your body. Imagine being

asphyxiated by your own blood and you'll get the picture. Needless to say, I wasn't excited about a vaccine, especially a rushed one made to appease mass hysteria. No one seemed much afraid of COVID until the media made it into the next Boogie Man. Would we have demanded a vaccine, or even had lock-downs at all, had the media actually been held accountable? Public Relations 101: Control the Conversation... *and that they did.*

Luckily, I do not share a Los Angeles zip code. I reside in Riverside County; we have Sheriff Bianco, who stands for freedom and our rights as Americans. We are not made to abide by stifling mandates (that carry little

to no legal weight) by force. I've never been asked for a "vaccine passport" and the only people asking us to wear masks are usually just the large chain stores. Most of my neighbors out here don't support dividing people, especially in times of crisis. We stood together then and we stand together now. (Something rarely advertised as Californian, right? It's a rarity to hear of Californian's who back the Constitution, but I assure you we do exist...)

Shortly after Los Angeles mandated their COVID policies, I realized I was then required to undergo a medical procedure to do just about everything in that county. Either get an invasive COVID test or worse, get an injection I don't want or feel I need. I'm just one of many under pressure to comply. When I realized what this meant for so many working in Los Angeles, I quickly understood what side of this I was on. How many people does this mandate truly protect or help? How many does it hurt? Are you more protected from a disease that you can still catch and spread after being vaccinated? Once vaccinated you also run the risk of adverse reactions, those of which you'll be condemned for discussing. Not to mention the cost to all of these businesses, the cost of freedom to run your business as you see fit. The cost of work for some people who, like me, choose to remain vaccine free. I have the luxury of choice to work from home, but not everyone does. What happened to freedom? What happened to bodily autonomy we worked so hard to fight for? Pay attention to something: COVID policies made some people rich while some lost everything...I refuse to stand for tyrants who value money over people.

When the word broke on the mandates, I was disgusted. My best friend has been vaccinated at least twice because his employer harassed him. He was afraid to lose his job, he just wanted things to go back to normal. He wanted to earn a decent living and live in the town he's worked so hard to be a part of. The problem is the mainstream media and government are giving people the impression that once we've all been vaccinated we can



return to normal, the impression that “herd immunity” is some utopia to work towards. The media and government built this system, do you really think they wanted normal to begin with? They profited from this. Did the people? Three vaccines to work, is that normal? What about the right to work? Vaccinate or be labeled a “Grandma killer?” “Take this drug or else!” “I won’t associate with you, you’re a risk!” A risk to what? Big Pharma’s bottom line?

Or the governments? It’s a proven fact that vaccinated people still contract and spread COVID; if the vaccine only works to reduce symptoms then you don’t need my “herd immunity” to make it work for you. You don’t need to discriminate against anyone.

My best friend and I haven’t spoken in several months. I’m not sure we’re even still friends. Why? Because I can’t live in a world where I’m discriminated against and he can’t live in a world where I’m not vaccinated. We have no quarrel with each other; we’re just on opposite sides of the chess board. *Pawns.*

Any hatred regarding vaccine status is just blind hatred and discrimination. I don’t care if you’re vaccinated or not, it really is none of my business; my vaccination status is none of yours. The media and certain government officials working overtime to sow dissension between two groups is nothing but rhetoric. Rhetoric aimed at the world to destroy families, friendships, employers, you name it. It’s nothing

but propaganda meant to fuel a totalitarian regime and destroy the freedoms this country is known for. Look around you, do you hate your neighbors? Why are you letting the talking heads on TV tell you what to believe? We went from lonely lockdowns to rage filled accusations on who’s right or wrong in this COVID nightmare. Who have we become?

The next time you strap a mask to your face, and feel sad that you can’t smile at a stranger...

The next time you see a non-hearing person struggling to read your lips through a mask....

The next time you cut ties with friends or colleagues simply because they aren’t vaccinated...

Keep in mind, these choices are your responsibility and you are accountable. You think for yourself, only you are responsible for your actions and owe it to yourself to make informed decisions. If you decide to social distance, wear a mask, get vaccinated, stay

inside, etc. no one can blame you for protecting yourself, do what you need to do...but stop with the baseless claims that the “unvaccinated” are selfish. We are unvaccinated because we, too, have a right to medical autonomy and choice. We have a right to natural immunity. We have a right to research, a right to accurate data, and the right to choose for ourselves if we want to inject an imperfect and dangerous drug into our bloodstreams. We want to get back to “normal” too. We are not your enemy, *infringement of rights are.*

I’m just one of many
under pressure to comply.
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this meant for so many
working in Los Angeles,
I quickly understood what
side of this I was on.



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WHAT IN THE WORLD HAVE WE DONE?

by Liberty Steadfast

We live in a culture where division is rampant. People have stopped being civil. Competitions and political races have become verbal assault arenas. It's so unnecessary. Positions of leadership should go to strong individuals who understand how to work well with others.

Think about it. If we keep electing people or choosing leaders because they can scream the loudest, dig deeper dirt, and throw the most damaging accusations, we will get exactly what we deserve. Chaos, confusion and pain.

Kindness and cooperation still matter. We watch sports teams. Imagine if every member of the team called himself or herself the most important? They would be fighting each other, focusing on defeating their teammate and in no time the team would lose every game. Why? Because they were no longer a team. If teamwork makes the dream work, isn't it obvious egotism and self love will destroy every group effort?

How can we turn this mentality around? It feels impossible. It's trite to say this idea came out of every child getting participation trophies and honor for simply attending workouts and games. But it did. The idea we should pat our own backs and demean other human beings so we can pretend to be leaders has created a situation where all the wrong people are running the show.

It will likely take another crisis or catastrophe to unite Americans again. Hostility, jealousy, and contempt for others has become normal. I am appalled at this division. Families have been shattered over politics and social dilemmas. Civil debate has ceased to exist. Insults and hostility are not only accepted; they are celebrated. What is going on? When did we, as a people, decide being kind was out of fashion?

I am a journalist. I love research and facts. I love that reporters are charged with presenting the who,

what, where, why, and when of all stories. It isn't the journalist's role to tell you to believe what they believe or to slant the story with manipulative photos and innuendo. I was taught that that is "yellow journalism," journalism based on sensationalism and crude exaggeration. Because television stations and newspapers are owned by biased individuals who prefer profit or political bias over truth, many journalists are being forced to report in ways that challenge their ethics and training.

Americans did not set out to fight each other, to abandon life long friendships, to emotionally separate from a spouse, a parent or even their own child. Media and insincere leaders deliberately caused this division, knowing our strength was in our unity. How did they do it? Let me count the ways: Abortion, Covid-19, masks, vaccines, sexual orientation, race, gender, charity, homelessness, poverty, religion, empathy, and so much more. They mock and demean certain groups while pretending to preach tolerance. Never has any group on earth been less tolerant than those who tell us we must be more accepting.

Will we fight this new "wisdom" or will we lose everything we've held dear, most importantly each other? Stop listening to these egregious fools. They have no good intentions for us. None. I quite imagine the parties and laughter they share as we march to their wicked drums. Do not think both sides of the aisle truly hate each other. It's us they hate. Our happiness. Our freedoms. Our love for our country and our fellow Americans. Once you realize we are nothing but a way to make even more money for them, you might just join me in turning off your television, saying a welcoming hello to your neighbors, getting back out into the world and demanding this division stop.

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Standing around for hours on end with your thumb in the air in hopes that something might happen is no easy task, but the military prepared me for a lifetime of hurry up and wait.

Last summer I made the decision to train hop hobo-style and hitchhike from the center of South Dakota to El Paso, Texas. From there, I would cross the border into Juarez and take an airplane to Hermosillo, Sonora, where

I'd be reunited with my girlfriend. The task was daunting, but I had been a US Army paratrooper for 5 years; I can jump in spite of fear. The miles were ragged, but I've been to Afghanistan and at least nobody here was actively trying to kill me.

My journey began on September 11th, 2020. Something about it being the anniversary of 9/11 seemed relevant. The attacks began decades of war in which I



myself would participate during a 2014 Afghanistan deployment. I struggle with my past as a soldier, sometimes even doubting this country was worth fighting for. My journey began during a turbulent election season, in the midst of the media amplifying only the worst of opinions, sowing ignorance and hatred on both sides. I heard plenty of opinions; some so close-minded they sickened me. Was this America? Was this what my friends died for; what I'd sacrificed so much for? I needed to know if it'd been worth it. Something was broken in my heart, and my head demanded the end of doubt. How was I to find what I didn't know to look for? By doing what I'd never done.

Doing what I'd never done was easier than I thought, and scarier than anything I'd ever done—at first. Once I was in the middle I realized the real fear lies in not doing it at all...

Asking strangers for help is terrifying. You don't know their intentions, you worry what they'll say, and you're scared of what they might do. That was the case for me at any rate. Sometimes they just ignored me, and I can't say I blame them. Mainstream media has us convinced other people are Them not Us... and you can't be too cautious around Them.

We all know that people can be cruel and I naturally experienced some of that along the way. Once I was trying to get a ride in South Dakota and an old lady sped by screaming "No! No! NO!" as she pointed at me and nearly hit the guard

Nik's view from the train.

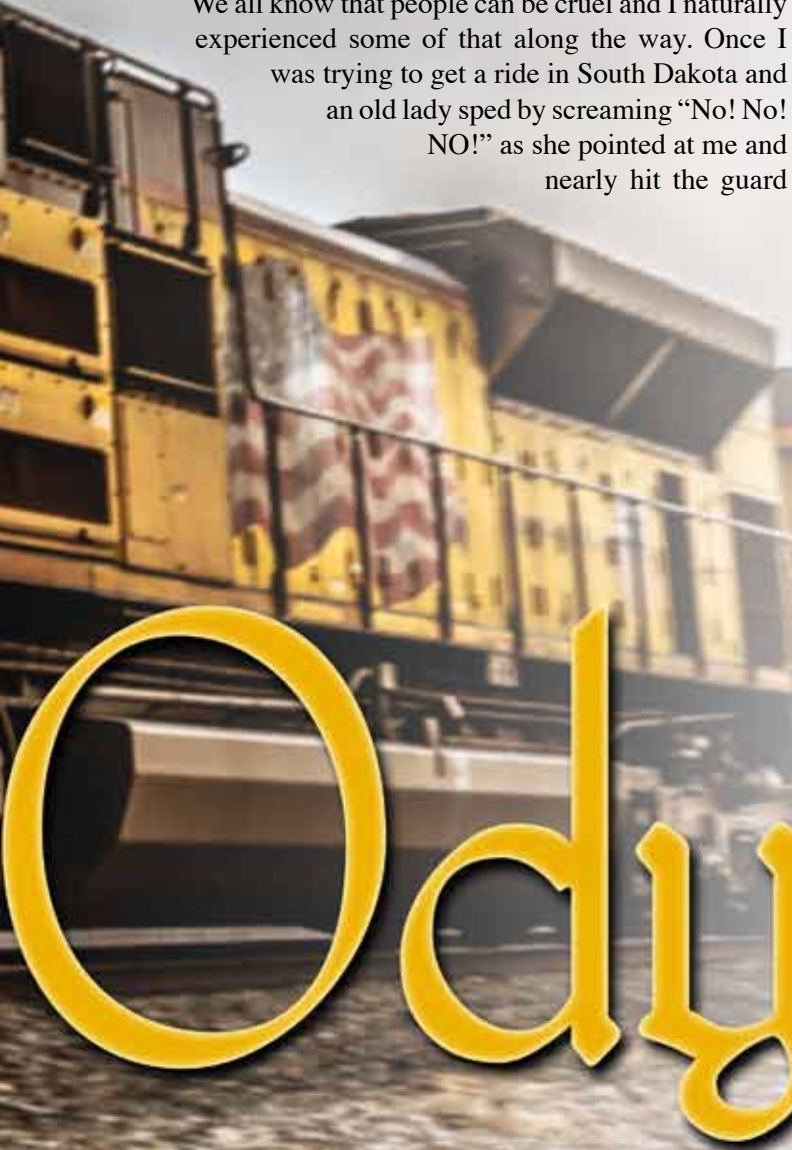
rail. Then there were those couple days I spent stuck in Belan, New Mexico where two men drove by in a pickup and threw a bottle of piss at me, demanding I get a job. Was the urine meant to go on my resume? I'll never know...

But more often than not people were genuine and kind. Giving yourself to the kindness of others is scary, but so is offering kindness. When you experience it it's nothing less than life affirming; it shatters assumptions and humbles the ego. In the end I think we all want the same thing. We want what is best for us, our children, and our society. We just don't know how to get there.

That's not to say that I, a humble individual, know the answer, but I bet we could figure it out together if we realized we're all stumbling through this thing called life. We need only to listen to one another with open minds and remember to be kind. It was a little after three in the morning on September 11th, 2020. I was on a moving freight train heading east. I needed to go west.

But the train was moving and I'd taken a conscious step into the unknown. For all my gripes and complaints about being a veteran, there's no doubt I'm better prepared to take on life's more difficult moments better than most. I tend to thrive in chaos.

Situation going bad? Always. Keep moving, figure it out.



by Nikolas T. Monastere

Odyssey

Plans fall apart? As is their way. Adjust accordingly and charlie-mike (continue mission).

Hop a train going the wrong direction? Might as well enjoy the experience!

The tracks paralleled Ol' Muddy—the Missouri River—quite a ways. The moon and stars were bright and the river was a dark blue vein coursing through the shadows of the earth. Hills rose and fell on either side of the tracks before smoothing into undulating prairie. A rugged ride, definitive destination, and no clear path. I tasted cool summer air and diesel fumes at the back of my throat, and I sang my favorite songs at the top of my lungs. I've spent my entire life chasing experience and stories. Gentle chaos—affirmations of life. The world turned grey then blue then green. I watched the sun rise from the back of a freight car, drawing mist that blanketed the fertile land in romance and mystery...

I admit it—this is one pretty country...

South Dakota

There'll be water if God wills it. I'm not religious, but I repeated that mantra like a Zen koan to keep focused. You see, I didn't want to panic. There'll be water if God wills it.

I'd sought refuge from the late-summer sun in a patch of trees across a field from the highway. It was over 100 degrees and humid. Moving back from Mexico, one consolation I could find was that at least it'd be cooler than

the Sonoran Desert. It was (not by much), but what it lacked in broiling heat it compensated with humidity.

I'd rolled out my poncho and jacket, leaned against my ruck, and taken a nap in the shade of a large tree. I woke up about an hour later with a damp back. The lid of my Camelbak was leaking. Most of the water was gone. The native guys who'd picked me up in Mitchell (home of the world's only Corn Palace) had dropped me off at South Dakota Highway 50—a two-lane prairie road. Their smartphones (I don't own one) said the next town was 14



A scene in South Dakota



miles away, and they assured me hitchhiking would be easy.

Six miles later and not so much as a smile from the few drivers that passed, and I wondered...

Beneath the shade of trees is an idyllic place to nap away the heat of the day, and so it had been until my rude awakening. There'll be water if God wills it.

I combined my Camelbak with what was left in my



water bottle and had exactly one liter left. It wasn't much, and I was only halfway to the next town at best, but sitting around stressing wasn't going to help.

I reminded myself I'd gone on longer movements with way more on my back in Fort Bragg and Afghanistan. The next several miles went well. I rationed my water and gutted one of the salt packets I'd snagged from a diner a few days earlier to help my body retain liquid. You got this. The "power of positivity" always seemed hokey and unrealistic to me, but there's absolutely no harm in adopting a good attitude in the face of bad situations. If it doesn't hurt, it can only help.



Nikolas in Afghanistan

There'll be water if God wills it.

A road sign announced the location of a lodge half a mile down an unpaved road intersecting the highway. If it proved fruitless it'd be a mile round-trip out of the way, but it was also the most likely place to find water. I was still well over a thousand miles from my destination—one more wouldn't break me. I decided to investigate.

I passed a farmhouse with the largest American flag I'd

ever seen flown at a private residence. A Trump-Pence 2020 flag of comparable size fluttered underneath. Two-hundred meters down the road stood a converted barn, clearly the lodge. All the doors were locked and the window curtains were drawn shut. There was a well-pump on the other side of the building and deliciously clean water poured out after I gave it a few pumps. Let there be water!

A pick-up truck pulled into the lodge as I was tightening my Camelbak, making sure it was tight. The white-haired driver introduced himself as Randall Carter. He and his wife saw me walking from their farmhouse next door. They owned the lodge.

Mr. Carter asked what you'd expect: Who was I? What I was doing out here? Where was I going? I told him.

"Mexico!" The reaction was almost always the same. It gave me a strange sense of pride to be on a journey the likes of which few can fathom. "Aren't you scared?"

I shrugged. "Safer than Afghanistan."

That would be my calling card for the rest of the trip—an implication that I'd been in service, but not a full reveal. Like I said, I struggle with my identity as a veteran and don't like to outright volunteer the information.

Mr. Carter asked if I'd served, and I said yes. He decided I was alright. Being a veteran can have its privileges. Mr. Carter hadn't served in an official capacity but he did help build Navy ships in his youth. He was proud to admit he and his wife bought most of their supplies from veteran-owned companies. "Do you like Black Rifle Coffee?" he asked. "We're big fans of them."

Their lodge was closed for the winter, hunting season having come and gone, but the beds were made and they turned on the hot water for me.

"How much is it for a night?" I asked. I had several hundred dollars in the bank.

"How much you got?"

"Fourteen in cash, but more on my card."

"I don't take card." He shrugged, smiled. "How about



you just give me fourteen and I'll send you the bill later?" His smile was genuine and warm—something best described as grandfatherly.

"That sounds wonderful, sir."

He brought me some dinner, plus some coffee for the morning. Offering shelter and food to travelers is a powerful gesture, one that shows up time and again in folktales and literature across the globe. It's an extension of goodwill to a complete stranger, and there is power in giving someone a place to sleep and food to eat. It runs deep, to the core of human experience. "You've come far and will go further still. Come—let me help you." It reminds me of Pashtunwali, sacred code of the Afghans, which states anyone who seeks shelter and food must be cared for, even if they're an enemy. Be it in legend or religion, it illustrates that we as a species understand the importance of helping one another, even if the politicians and

media would have you believe otherwise. You must remember this.

The next day Mr. Carter gave me a ride to the highway, some granola bars and water bottles, plus a printed map of major interstates. Until then my only plan had been to head south and west until I got a bit closer to Mexico, then I'd adjust accordingly. Mr. Carter shook my hand and wished me well before driving away.

I stood on the ramp for well over seven hours without catching a ride. Later that day Mrs. Carter dropped off a sandwich and some cookies. She was as sweet and generous as her husband. Later, I caught a westward ride from an intoxicated cowboy who was kind enough to share some of his vices with me. I cracked a beer and watched the highway ramp disappear behind me. Thanks to the Carters I had a map, clean clothes, a washed body, and a full belly. These may sound like simple things, but you don't take them for granted when you're traveling...Nor do you forget the ones who gave them to you.

Nebraska

I only flew my sign for about 10 minutes before getting picked up by a Cuban truck driver named Jose. Jose emigrated to the US seven years prior, and had just received his permanent residency card through the trucking company, which had also sponsored his green card. He spoke broken English and was embarrassed by it, but I told him not to worry. My Spanish is mediocre, and I know from firsthand experience



how embarrassingly difficult it is when you can't communicate very well. I told him his English was significantly better than my Spanish.

Mi nuevo amigo (my new friend) had a family back in Cuba—a wife and kids. Their picture was taped to his dashboard.

"I miss them a lot," he said. "But I stay happy. People say happiness here," he pointed to his chest "but this where you feel happy. I no feel happy all the time, but... siempre happy. Siempre means always, yes? Because I carry happiness here" he pointed to his head. "I no always feel happy, but it's always here. Siempre happy. I still have it, yes? You understand?"

I nodded.

"My happy is with my wife and kids. I carry them here," he pointed to his head again "where I keep happy. You see? They make me happy, even when I miss them. Yo siempre happy."

Siempre happy.

Jose got me to a truck stop and used his reward points to get me a shower. He left as I was waiting for my stall to open, hugging me and reminding me "Siempre happy." He'd told me the company would sponsor his wife and kids after another fourteen months of working for them. That time has come and gone. I hope they're with him in person now!

It took awhile to catch a ride out of that truck stop, but I'd grown to expect nothing less. One of the workers came out and gave me a burger and fries, and I spent an hour cleaning the trash from the lawn in front of the gas pumps. I was feeling good, and I was

suddenly in love with everything. My journey, the people around me, the whole experience of it all. Life itself just felt right.

I was reading on the ground, leaning against my ruck with my sign propped against my legs, when a man strolled

by. A black man, who could've been aged anywhere from forty to sixty-five. We locked eyes and smiled, nodding to one another. He passed me, stopped, and turned around.

"Young man, what is your name?"

"I'm Nik, sir."

"Nik, God gave you a gift, son, and he's tired of you not using it. He wants you to stop running and use your gift. He gave it to you to give to others and he's tired of you playing! You owe it to yourself, Nik, you owe it to me and God and everybody else. Share what He has given you. No more games! Stop playin', young man."

I didn't know what to say.

"God's been talkin' to you, son. He's been talking to you in dreams, since before you can even remember. You know what He's asking you, right? You know what I'm saying to you, right?"

I blinked. "Yes, sir."

He smiled. "You a good man, Nik. God gives gifts to the good ones. They gotta share it if they gonna be worthy of it."

And with that he nodded and walked away. I watched him go, and after a couple steps he turned. "Nik. That short for Nikolas?"

"It is. What's your name?"

"My name's Dwight, Nik—excuse me, Nikolas." He smiled, punched his palm, and turned away. "Nikolas. Nikolas!"

It was one of the more surreal experiences I had during that trip, but life's always been stranger than fiction.



...I caught a westward ride from an intoxicated cowboy who was kind enough to share some of his vices with me. I cracked a beer and watched the highway ramp disappear behind me.

Continued on page 62



Modern Maverick

WHY DO YOU NEED ANYTHING?

by Robert Stanley

If you're like me, you've been at that dinner, you know the one where the host asks you if you'd like a non animal protein, allergen free option, and someone will bring up politics. There you sit trying to be a calm "extremist" when the topic of gun control comes up.

"Why does anyone need an AR-15?"

This is where I hit my red line, my rev limiter if you will. I can't help myself. I use this as an avenue to show that there, at the gluten free table, is a nutjob with an assault rifle in his possession shooting none of the guests. They wouldn't even know I had one if they hadn't made one of many assumptions that tend to happen at these dinners. But rather than denigrate, I use this as an opportunity to educate on how purchasing a firearm works, how a pew pew works in general, and the reasons I believe that every American Citizen should think about owning an AR-15.

Let's look at the latter. WHY should you think about owning an AR? I am not going to define the function of an AR or highlight all of the features of an AR, if you're reading this publication I am assuming that you understand the function of this platform and you know that the AR doesn't stand for Assault Rifle.

I would like to put together an argument for those moments between "pass me the bean sprouts please" and "This Tofurkey is amazing!" ...by the way Google docs didn't spell check Tofurkey which should scare

you. I'll build this in a Question Answer format for you to screenshot and use at your next statist saturated neighborhood event.

You Can't Use an AR-15 to Hunt.

This is the first argument I often hear, and it couldn't be further from the truth. The assumption here is because these are "Weapons of War" they couldn't possibly be used for the ethical, renewable gathering of animal based protein. Let's see why this isn't the case.

AR's are being chambered for multiple rounds tailored to big game hunting. With a standard AR-15 lower alone you can get uppers built for straight walled rifle calibers such as .350 Legend and .450 Bushmaster. These rounds are some of the only centerfire rifle chamberings that are legal to use for big game hunting in states like Ohio, Indiana and parts of Michigan, just to name a few. Moreover, rounds like the .223 Wylde and .224 Valkyrie have been designed in a way that makes the standard AR-15 platform more capable of taking on big game like White-tails, Pronghorn and even Black Bears.

This platform can also be easily converted to a .22 Long Rifle set up very easily with a few non gunsmith needed parts. This is a gun for chasing small game like squirrels and rabbits wherever they might be found.

The features of an AR make for a great firearm for novice hunters to start with. They easily accept optics at



multiple locations, this helps with making for a correct eye relief situation for the shooter. The light recoil from the gas systems operation makes for a downright pleasure to shoot and the fact that the stock in the non communist states of the USA can be adjusted to the proper length of pull makes for a firearm that any stature shooter can be comfortable shooting.

I find that many of the uninitiated minions believe an AR has to have a 30 round magazine when in reality most states limit the magazine capacity to 5-10 rounds for hunting purposes. This should tie well into the next question and answer.

You don't need 30 rounds.

There is so much to unpack here.

Since "Because I Can" only seems to be a reasonable

and propensity to violence that it takes to initiate a home invasion might be physically capable of. I want the best possible tool to take on that situation. Shop class taught me not to use a screwdriver to open a paint can because it leads to sloppy messes, and so is a shotgun when you can use the right tool, an AR-15.

If you'd like to fight with the folks further you can show them Youtube videos of people defending their homes with AR's or even the McCloskey's....although that might get you labeled as a racist, because "facts." If I had 300+ people storming my private property, breaking down the security gates and threatening violence I may want 30 rounds.

They are meant to Kill people at a greater rate.

You're right. They are. That is the nature of the gun, be it a matchlock or an AR. You see the Knights of Europe were displaced by the firearm in the hands of more common folks, as well as the Samurai in Japan and these were just black powder single shot rifles. The Battle of Little Bighorn was partially won by the Native American coalition because they were using repeating arms and the US Calvary was using single shot carbines. An advance in firearms technology has generally been made to kill more. These things are not mutually exclusive.

So, I think we can see that a bunch of people with firearms can resist the greatest military the world has ever known, see Vietnam and now Afghanistan, not an F-15 or Nuke to be found. This is the argument of matching the current US military in force. We have seen in the past what happens to unarmed societies, Russia, Germany, Cambodia and China just to name a few. And we have seen what an armed revolution can do to keep a government in check. In fact shouldn't leftists love this? See China, Russia and Cuba.....

When taking our own 2A rights into account, there are officials that feel the need to say "They couldn't buy a cannon or that was written for muskets." First, yes, yes they could. Second, that amendment wasn't written for muskets, it was written to protect the people from threats no matter what the threat is armed with (See what I did there with that sentence structure). It has been upheld by SCOTUS as an individual's right to keep and bear arms. So, it should be apparent that it is meant for equal protection of force just as the rest of the freedoms are covered for everyone in this country by the Equal Protection Clause.

And that's a wrap..

At this point in the meal you should be thinking about how to best eat your leftovers in a wrap or something like a panini I guess. You should notice that my 'questions' were statements because the media has taught people to speak in absolutes when it comes to "Gun Violence" ...y'know where a noun is used as an adjective unlike knife, fist or hammer violence. I'd imagine the meal has gotten a bit

*They are meant to Kill
people at a greater rate.
You're right. They are. That
is the nature of the gun ...*



answer to this sort of person when it's the almighty government establishing some sort of power over them and not a Freedom loving Patriot establishing their own power in the reverse instance, we will have to use facts sprinkled with the thing they respond to: emotions.

Put them mentally in a situation or position that feels hard and scary. Then give them the option to face this with an AR and watch the yoga contortions around supporting their positions on AR's begin.

My first answer tends to be visceral, if someone breaks into my home or threatens my loved ones with a gun I want to be able to present an insurmountable amount of force and violence. If we have gotten to the point of drawing a gun we have gotten to the point that whatever is happening has to stop happening that very second.

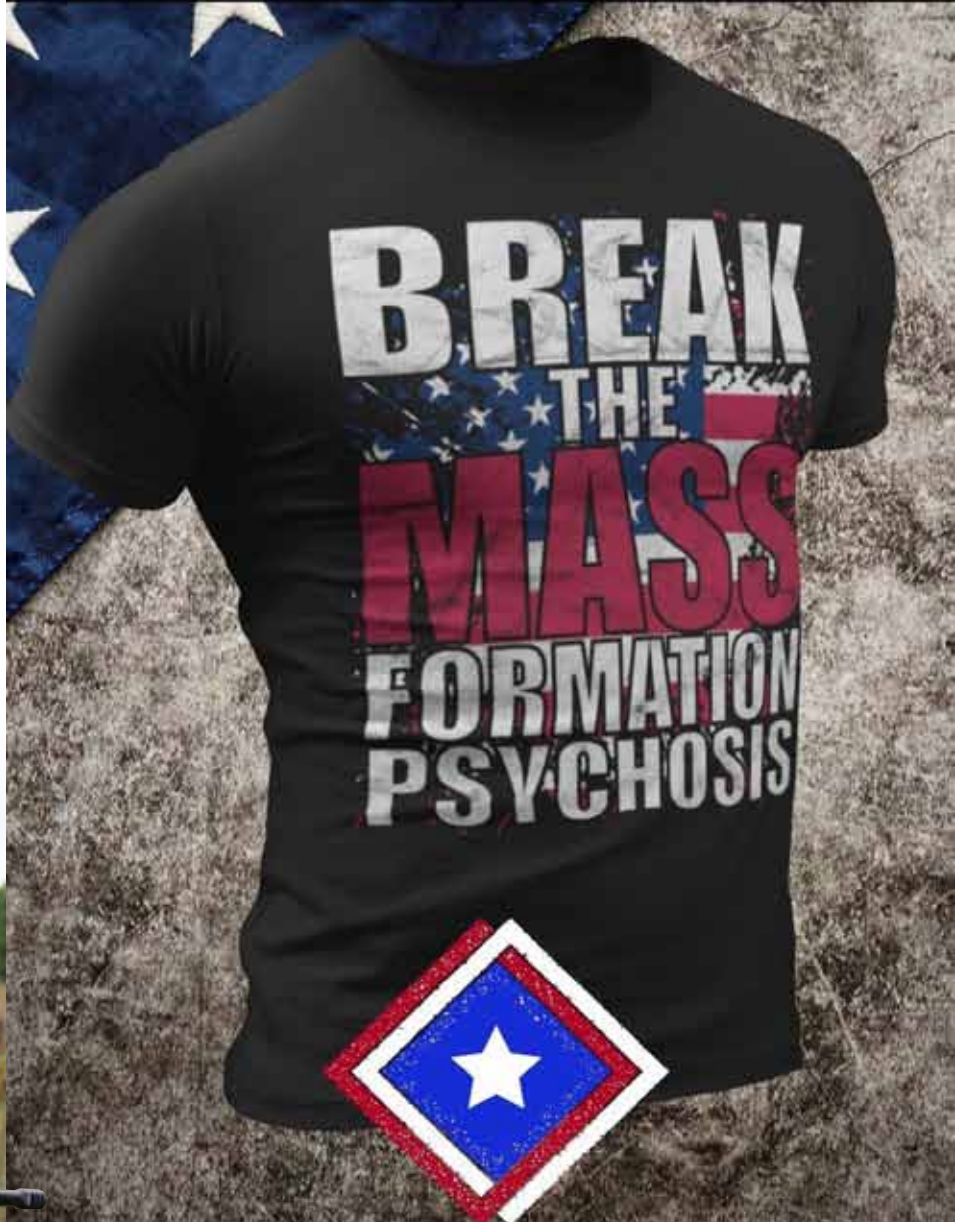
The horse is out of the barn as far as guns go, there are more guns than people in this country. The chances that a home invader or the like has a firearm is exceedingly high. If this is the case wouldn't you want the most capable firearm in that moment to protect you and yours? Moreover what if its someone you cannot physically stop. Not Brock Lesnor but even just anyone who is mentally capable of exhibiting the lack of empathy and the amount of balls



heavy and you may not get invited back....Damn....Luckily, you will have either changed minds or made enemies, or maybe just maybe, shown that people can and should have different positions and ideas on a multitude of subjects and then state that you're willing to use your AR-15 to defend their right to such ideals, point of view, speech about such, property, family or life. We, the informed, are the only ones in a position to protect the communities that may not understand us but are lucky to have us. Remember that sheep have no idea what it is to be a sheep dog. They can't relate to what that feeling is and to them the wolves and the sheep dogs resemble each other too much to know who is safe and who is dangerous, that's for the Dogs and Wolves to sort out.



FREEDOM OR DEATH



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The Nation's GREATEST

Pictures for Heroes:

Stanley Troutman

10/03/1917

War Correspondent

by Emily Putzke all portrait photos by Zach Coco

In 1937, twenty-year-old Stanley Troutman was employed at Acme News Agency where he mixed chemicals and performed mundane tasks. Six years later, he had risen in the ranks as a photographer and was given an opportunity that would change his life. It was 1943 when Stanley's boss at Acme approached him about an opening for a war correspondent. "I really wasn't that red hot about going because I had a wife and daughter. Well, my

patriotism got the best of me and so I made the decision to go ahead."

Stanley left his family and safe stateside job, voluntarily putting himself in harm's way, with no military training and armed only with a 4x5 speed graphic camera. He was put on board the aircraft carrier *Intrepid* and shipped to the Pacific where he was to document the American fight against the Japanese Empire.



His first assignment was the invasion of Saipan. Dressed in Marine fatigues, sleeping in foxholes, and eating C-rations, Stanley endured the same hardships as most combat infantrymen would, with no gun to defend himself. The only thing Stanley was shooting was his camera. "If you were caught with a weapon, they could shoot you as a spy, but as a correspondent without a weapon you would be treated as a war prisoner."

Stanley found himself in the middle of the action on a hill in Saipan. He threw himself flat on the ground as Japanese machine gun fire suddenly whizzed through the air. Stanley tried to shield himself from the bullets behind his speed graphic camera. "All I can remember is seeing a bullet hit the soldier to my right."

Stanley stayed on Saipan for nearly a month before being sent to other Pacific islands, including Tinian, Guam, Peleliu, Leyte, Borneo, Manila, and Corregidor. When American troops invaded

"It was hard for me to realize one bomb could do so much damage."

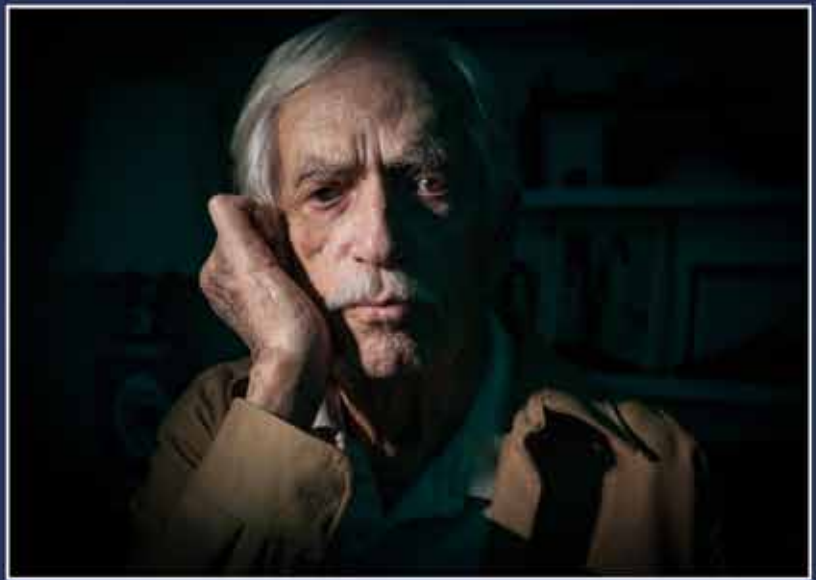
Corregidor, he made the mistake of going in too early.

"I was with the ninth wave going in. I thought everything seemed pretty secure." A Japanese sniper aimed at Stanley's landing craft on which eighteen men were aboard. Bullets flew around them, taking the lives of three men and wounding others.

Once on Corregidor, Stanley took photographs of General MacArthur who wanted to inspect the Malinta Tunnel which served as a bomb-proof storage and personnel bunker before becoming a hospital for wounded troops later on.

"He started down into the Malinta Tunnel by himself. I was the only photographer, questioning myself, do I go in or let him go?" Stanley was hesitant, wondering if Japanese snipers would start shooting at any moment, but he went in anyway. Thankfully, they emerged safely, and Stanley got his photographs.

Stanley sent his photographs to the War Picture Pool in Pearl Harbor where they were processed, proofed, and then sent to Acme.



Soloman Schwartz

09/15/1918

Army Air Corps

by Emily Putzke

Solomon Schwartz was twenty-three years old when he enlisted in the Army Air Corps. His unit was shipped to the Philippines that autumn, a place that forever changed him. Little did Solomon know that he was about to become a prisoner of war for forty-two months.

On December 8th, 1941, the Japanese began bombing the Philippine Islands. U.S. troops were ordered to leave the mainland for a place called Bataan, a little peninsula off the coast of the Philippines. Solomon's unit helped set up a beach defense against the advancing Japanese army, but they were under supplied and soon forced to concede. "Any American you talk to didn't want to surrender."

Solomon was among 60,000-80,000 American and Filipino soldiers who were rounded up by Japanese soldiers and forced to march over sixty miles in what became known as the infamous Bataan Death March. ... When asked what kept him going during those horrific years as POW, Solomon said, "It's just what you did. I was a prisoner and I didn't want to die."

Read more of Mr. Schwartz's fascinating story at:

<https://picturesforheroes.com/#/soloman-schwartz/>



The Nation's GREATEST

Acme sent copies of everything he took to the Associated Press, Life Magazine, and the International News Service.

In 1945, Stanley became a correspondent for the Air Force, giving them publicity as they began to separate themselves from the Army Air Corps. The Air Force gave the correspondents a literal trip around the world in an effort to show what the Air Force had done to help win the war.

Stanley was one of the first American journalists to document the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki after the atomic bombs had been dropped. Along with one other photographer and ten correspondents, they landed in Hiroshima a month to the day after the explosion. From the airplane as they prepared to land Stanley could see the amount of damage, describing the effects of the bomb as “a pebble dropping into a lake.”

The waves of the bomb spread far and wide, wiping out some areas while jumping over others. “It was hard for me to realize one bomb could do so much damage.” Stanley photographed Japanese civilians with burns on their bodies along with rubble and desolation the bomb left in its wake.

When Stanley returned home, he became a bureau manager for Acme in Los Angeles before working forty-two years at UCLA in cinematography. In 1956, he was given the opportunity to help film the Olympics in Australia. Stanley looks back on his full life with thankfulness. “I’ve had a fabulous life.”

To read about more great American heroes or to support this wonderful endeavor and buy the book go to www.picturesforheroes.com.



William Tarczy

10/15/1923

Army Air Corps

by Joseph Fernandez

Flying at 20,000 feet, Staff Sergeant Tarczy looked out and saw the other B-24 Liberators of his squadron in their positions as they flew to Iwo Jima to support the Marines. In flight, anything could happen. The randomness of combat had frightened Tarczy on his first missions as he never knew what to expect. As his missions became routine, wariness remained but not fear. Now, however, he was scared. He was on his 38th mission, close to the magic mission which would end his combat tour and allow him to rotate to the United States. Anything could happen; suddenly it did. The aircraft in formation 50 feet from his window burst into flame and nosed straight down. A Kamikaze had attacked, and no one had seen him until too late. Tarczy could see no parachutes. He still had two missions to go.

...William left in his senior year of high school to enlist in the Civilian Conservation Corps and earn \$30 per month, sending \$25 to assist his family. ... on March 3, 1943, Tarczy was conscripted and assigned to the U.S. Army Air Corps.

Read more of Mr. Tarczy's incredible story at:

<https://picturesforheroes.com/#/william-tarczy/>

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Tucked Away

Seaside Aquarium

Seaside, OR

by Celeste Bivin

photos provided by Seaside Aquarium except where specified

In this column we will be exploring the wonders and quaint places that America has tucked away and off the beaten path. Some might be a little more known than others and some of them you may be hearing about for the first time. It is our intention to include a plethora of places to go, see and things to do. The USA is a large country ... so off we go!

When I was a little girl, many years ago, my family had a cabin in Cannon Beach, Ore. We spent many a wonderful time out there with no TV and no telephone. I don't care what people say, the 70s and 80s were a great time to be a child. My cousin and I would spend hours at the beach playing in the tide pools and climbing Haystack Rock.

One of our favorite places to go was up the coast to Seaside. What a fun little town that was and right on the beach. Best of all was the aquarium. No visit to Seaside was complete without it.

As a matter of fact it was almost a sacrilege to even think about not stopping at the Seaside Aquarium.

My favorite part was going in and seeing all the fish and sea anemones. The seals were a little too much for me, as I did not like sharp loud noises. They were a very vocal lot and still are. However, we always bought a bag of fish to feed to the seals and I did love to watch them noise or no noise.

I can't express how much I love this little aquarium. The employees are so friendly, there is always lots of fish and sea life to look at and the displays are easy



Below: Pinni, born May 31, 2013. Don't be surprised when you see this cutie waving at you...she wants your fish.

Right: The outside of the aquarium. The building is right on the beach so you can hit two birds with one stone, the beach and the aquarium.



A little History

The building was built in 1924 and when it opened it was a salt water bath house and swimming pool named the Seaside Baths Natatorium. It closed in the early 30s and reopened in 1937 as the Seaside Aquarium.

In 1938 they even added apartments upstairs called the Seawater apartments which are no longer in use.

Seaside Aquarium is the oldest privately owned aquarium on the west coast. 2022 will be it's 85th year and 2024 will be the 100th year for the building which houses it.



Tucked Away

Seaside Aquarium

Seaside, OR





Touch Tank in the Discovery Center.



Fish and sea anemones taken by Kate L.

viewing. I didn't know then that they changed with the seasons. I happen to think that is a really great idea as you are seeing something different on a regular basis giving you all the more reason to visit many times over.

Of course the main attraction were and still are the harbor seals. They have 11, of which seven are girls and four are boys. Each with their own personality. All born at the aquarium. Most of the time they are in the public viewing area. I can imagine why too. That's where all the guests with bags of fish are. No self respecting seal would pass that up. Be prepared for them to ham it up. Slapping tummies and splashing to get you to part with fish are just a couple of the antics they can get up to. I myself am a sucker for their big eyes. I will not say you won't get wet, so don't be surprised if you get doused with water.

I can only remember a couple times when I was young that the seals weren't in the viewing area or only a couple were. They have a much larger swimming and sleeping area away from the public eye that they have access to at all times.

It was with much joy when I sat down to do this column, to find that they were still going strong. So many things from my youth don't exist anymore.

Since I was a child, they have added a new Discovery Center in which you can use microscopes to view tiny creatures, see special exhibits of sea life as well as a Touch Tank where you can get up close and personal with starfish, sea urchins etc. Boy, would I have loved that as a child! My daddy would never have gotten me to leave.

Seaside Aquarium is so much more than just an aquarium. They are involved with helping to keep the beaches clean, public awareness programs that help to educate people and sea turtle rescue. Even though the aquarium is not set up for turtle rescue and rehabilitation, they will take rescued turtles to one of the two nearest facilities that can help.

The Seaside aquarium was founded in 1937 and to this day some of the descendants of the founders are still involved in the operation. I have to say I envy them. What a wonderful family legacy.

Tucked Away

Seaside Aquarium

Seaside, OR

Keep in mind this is a small aquarium (you can go through it in about 30-40 minutes) that has been around going on 85 years. It is not for everyone. If you are wanting a state of the art place that is able to spend millions of dollars on the littlest of things then this is NOT the place for you. On the other hand if you like tucked away, quaint and intimate places then this is right up your alley. Better still, it is right on the beach so you can explore the beach before or after you go.

We need to support and keep places like this open because when people can see and interact with ocean animals, then they have reason to care about them and the condition of the ocean. This goes for other

wild animals too. Places like this also inspire our future oceanographers, veterinarians, animal rescue etc. They inspire people to be mindful not to trash our beaches and wildernesses so we can all enjoy them. Most of all it creates the wonderful memories that, like me, you remember for a lifetime.

For more information about Seaside Aquarium and the seals go to www.seasideaquarium.com

***Note: Because of state mandates, they ask that you wear a mask while in their facility. The aquarium did inform me that when the state drops the mandate they will no longer require the masks to be worn.*



Lewis, born June 6th 2003, is named after the famous explorer Meriwether Lewis. Capturing your attention by slapping his belly, Lewis's appetite for fish legendary.

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Taming the Winter Cold

I remember getting a winter cold as a child. It usually started with shivering chills and that irritated or slightly sore throat. My mother, ever alert to danger signs in her children, responded quickly.

Out came the vaporizer, the buttered toast, hot tea and warm fuzzy blanket. She'd make a bed on the couch, fluff a pillow, and turn on the television. Thus, I began to view the common cold as both a blessing and a curse. Lunch was always a grilled cheese sandwich and a steaming bowl of tomato soup.

No school. Smith Brothers cough drops. Watching the Mickey Mouse Club on a black and white TV. The cold and sore throat were still miserable but the pampering and special privileges made it bearable.

These days, in spite of Covid concerns, the common cold still finds us. My kids get that soft bed on the couch and hot herbal tea. There are improvements. Toasted bagels with cream cheese, color TV with 200 plus channels to choose from, as well as puzzles, games and contact with the world from their cell phones. Comfort is comfort. We crave it. It is part of the complicated relationship we have forged with the common cold.

We have more options these days. Have you tried the weighted blankets? They're like an ongoing hug from a friend. Ice

Chips Candy, the well-known Good for You Candy, offers a Menthol Eucalyptus flavored Ice Chip. Is it better? It is. Made with xylitol, this candy bursts through your cold with nasal clearing power thanks to the strong mucus busting properties of menthol and eucalyptus. The Grapefruit essential oil soothes a sore throat while Himalayan salt assists in removing bacteria from the mouth. A natural alternative to sugar, germs and bacteria cannot proliferate on xylitol. The xylitol calms Eustachian tubes and mild ear aches. Cough drops produced with sugar actually causes germs and bacteria to multiply!

Looking out the windows, we watch blowing snow while the few remaining leaves float to the ground. Trees sway in the wind, seeming to shiver in the cold. The warm couch bed feels like Heaven.

Yes, the common cold has us in it's grip but we now grip it right back. Tight chests convulse in coughing fits. Many mom's, unwilling to use the petroleum based older chest rubs, turn to Breathtaking, a natural aromatic blend of essential oils and coconut oil that comforts the chest, opening nasal passages and flooding stuffy sinuses with healing comfort. Place a dab of Breathtaking Vapor



Rub in a cup of hot water, breathe deeply and allow the aromatic steam to penetrate sinuses and senses! This safe and natural product, devoid of any petroleum ingredients, is found at Naked Newt Skincare.

The common cold has met its match. Treat your family to all those comforting "stay at home" foods, those rare "watching television all day" privileges and then, the big guns: Breathtaking Vapor Rub and Menthol Eucalyptus Ice Chips.

Dreading that common cold? Don't worry. We've got this.

Purchase the Cold Buster Combo here: www.nakednewsolutions.com



A Tale of Tyranny

by Toomany O. Pressed



I don't know about you, but I am sick and tired of COVID-19 Mandates. I'm one of thousands of small business owners in America. The COVID-19 Mandators are crushing us in unique ways that not everyone is aware of. I hope to bring to light some of the complexities others like myself are being forced into.

Let me be fully clear. I personally am for getting vaccinated. I am also 100% in favor of personal choice to vaccinate or not. I am against vaccine and mask mandates. It's a fundamental right to choose what a person takes into their bodies and to wear a mask or not. American's also are free to choose the level of risks they take. It's America!!

Now if you were to visit my business establishment (with 15+ employees) you might not be able to tell that I have the above strongly held beliefs. That is because my business is classified as an "Other Health Care Facility." The COVID-19 Mandators have imposed strict rules which we must follow "or else." We'll be wearing a mask, social distancing, be fully vaccinated, and we'll ask you to mask up too. You'll probably want to get upset and want to yell at me or my employees too. But wait! I'm on your side. Let me tell you a tale of tyranny.

What is the "or else?" Threats!! My business relies on 95%+ grant funding streams starting at my local County and up the food chain to the State. Those funds come with very strong strings attached. If I don't comply, my funding will be cut and previously paid funds can be taken back! Plain and simple - We

go out of business if we lose our funding. Then all my clients will lose services. Awful!

Threat #1 - "Prove it or lose it." California Department of Public Health requires ALL employees in Health Care facilities to be fully vaccinated. Only two exemptions are granted; 1) A Qualifying Medical Reason approved by a licensed doctor or 2) a decline based upon a Religious Belief. Getting a doctor to give you an exemption is nearly if not totally impossible. No doctor in their right mind will risk his or her license so you can have an exemption (See Threat #2). So that only leaves my staff the last option of filing a religious exemption with me, their employer. The burden is placed on me! I have to accept or reject each one. The government doesn't verify this. I have to. I get sued if I do it wrong too. Not the government. Remember, I fully support my employees right not to vaccinate. So for now, while I have a choice, they all get approved!

Next if they exercise their option to not vaccinate, they are subject to weekly COVID-19 testing (I also get to pay for that or find a free location for them to get tested, but that's another story.). I have to keep an exhaustive log of all the testing results by week, exposures, etc. ready at all times for a walk in inspection by the COVID-19 Mandators.

Here is the "Prove it or lose it." By law I have to keep payroll records right? Of course. Now I also have to keep weekly negative COVID testing results and log for each employee. Both logs are scrutinized



by auditors hand in hand. If I turn in an invoice for payment I had better be sure any employee listed on that invoice had a negative COVID-19 test in my log for the time they were on the clock! If not, I won't get paid. If I did get paid, I get to give that money back! It doesn't matter if the employee already did the work and was completely healthy.

Threat #2 - "We will revoke your license!" Yep, we have been warned multiple times now that if we don't comply with any COVID-19 mandate we are subject to having our license revoked. They aren't kidding. On two additional occasions, I have been told that they might also make the revoking retroactive to when the license was originally granted. It was one of those don't challenge us or this will happen moment. That means, I could possibly have to return any funds paid back to when my license was granted!! Holy Cow. That would shut my doors immediately. You see they have me over a barrel because it's illegal to bill for services for which I'm not licensed. If my license goes away retroactively I'm done. It's a gotcha moment. Isn't that nice of them!

Threat #3 - Weaponizing Cal-OSHA. This one really burns my biscuit too. None of my grant funding streams have been increased as a result of COVID-19 Mandates. I am to do my best and make it work. But wait a minute. I didn't submit my grant application and budgets with the understanding that I would be providing time off for staff to get weekly testing, paying for testing, purchasing boxes and boxes of N-95 Masks, and so on. What about all the cleaning supplies too?? This is super expensive. This is one

huge unfunded mandate that I just get to absorb out of the goodness of my heart. Garbage!! I say weaponized because I'm subject to fines if I don't comply with the edicts of Cal-OSHA. I can be sued for not protecting my employees from COVID. It's a workplace hazard like a pesticide now. Once again, the employer is the one bearing the cost of this!! I say bill CHINA!!

Threat #4 - Don't hire Unvaccinated. This one I'm crying uncle and going along with the COVID Mandators. They beat me. I will indeed require proof of vaccination before I hire anyone in the future. I simply can't afford more testing of unvaccinated people. It's a fact, they cost me more money and paperwork. Vaccinated employees are cheaper for me to deal with.

"We as AMERICANS need to come together. ... get out and vote these fools out of office! You and I have POWER if we stand up in our personal lives."

I don't know about you but I'm convinced that evil minds in secret chambers are orchestrating this crisis. They feed off of the chaos. They like seeing maskers fight against non maskers and employees pitted against employers. They like controlling us with fear. I say stop the garbage!! Stop this Tale of Tyranny. No more fear. Get out and live life. This is not healthy for AMERICA!! We as AMERICANS need to come together. Stop those evil minds from destroying friendships, business relationships and so on. Help businesses like mine who are being oppressed. Thank them for doing the best they can under the oppression they face. Next, get out and vote these fools out of office! You and I have POWER if we stand up in our personal lives. Talk to your neighbors. Start the movement in your cul-de-sac today.



Covid 19

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people**

**U.S. Government,
Mandates &
Power Hungry
Politicians**

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Beware the Mama Bear



by Anita Patriot

SHOW ME YOUR TEETH

I'm nobody important. I don't hold public office. I am not a lawyer, doctor, nurse, or any other intellectual of official capacity. I am not a police officer or enlisted; the only authority I hold is over my own household. My education consists of a high school diploma and, on a good day, a penchant for diligent research. I am simply a mother, a wife, and a writer.

In March 2020, I was separated from my husband, running my own business, and raising a toddler alone. Adding insult to injury, lockdowns started on my birthday (as I've mentioned in another piece). While the company of a two-year-old is irreplaceable and wonderful, I got lonely for like-minded conversation very quickly. I started an Instagram, dedicated it to memes and some mind-blowing shares, and soon enough I had a whole new world to socialize in. I mostly shared COVID content or updates on unbelievable news we can't get from the news networks anymore. Suddenly I found myself inundated with direct messages from other moms, dads, and caregivers. I couldn't keep up! I, without warning, had enough followers to fill a small stadium. What was more shocking was most of the messages I got were similar; people were afraid for their lives. I received questions like: Am I going to lose my job if I don't get vaccinated? Is the vaccine safe, what if I don't want it? I can't support my family if I don't show proof of vaccination but it's not for me, how can I keep my family safe? Will we lose access to schools, banks, grocery stores, churches, and other essentials? The list goes on, but you get the picture.

I found myself at a complete loss. Who am I to offer advice? How could I possibly be of any assistance? That's when it hit me: I am a Mother. I am a Mama Bear. I share the same concerns, the same questions, the same fierce love and protectiveness over my Baby Bear that these other care-givers do. They came to me because I gave myself a voice, a platform; I made myself available to help, to connect in some small way. That's when it really sank in for me: the mainstream media is only influencing the people

who want to be influenced. Everyone else is looking for answers wherever they can find them. Everyone else is coming together in a huge way, a way I've never seen before. If only we could show the mainstreamers that we really are all in this together. We innately bond and rely upon each other, not unlike prides of lions or packs of wolves. When we escape the mass formation psychosis mindset, we thrive as a community. Instincts aren't always about hunting and killing, they're also about preservation and compassion.

After one of my posts made 70,000 views, it drove home for me that speaking up when it's my turn is important, it's necessary, even when the result might intimidate me. Sometimes life throws us a curveball that we can't catch but we become better players as a result. 2020 made me a better player and I want to share with you the lessons it taught me:

Ask Questions. I've learned that even if my question sounds crazy or stupid to me, it isn't. I've also learned that a person usually does not receive any decent answer if they haven't asked for one. Be brave, be bold, and ask the hard questions. Ask often and don't apologize for it. A great example here is with your healthcare providers and school administrators. If you need information, ask for it. If you want to know what your pediatrician's stance is on vaccinations, call before you visit. Ask. If you want to know what the faculty are doing to care for your students mental health during mask mandates, don't be afraid to ask. Sometimes asking is all it takes. Sometimes it takes one person asking one question to break the group-think psychosis and jar people into conscientious behavior. Questions like: How are my kids going to be affected by this choice? Will my children be able to have children after this experimental drug? Can I see the insert? If you wouldn't let your kid have a tattoo because it's permanent, I suggest giving intravenous drugs a good think.

Continued on next page

Do NOT Be a Doormat. When someone shows you who they are, believe them. I spent too much time in my life giving people an opportunity to treat me poorly. I am not here to grant clemency or eternal forgiveness; I cannot love someone well enough to make them love him or her self. That is their job. I need to love myself, because if I don't I cannot protect my child. If you allow yourself to be a doormat, your child is the floor it sits on. Lift both of you up! Furthermore, refusing to be a doormat means enforcing boundaries. We could all benefit from boundaries right now and, no, I do not mean social distancing. I mean enforcing boundaries on entities like the federal government who do not co-parent with us. I am my child's parent. You are your child's parent. Joe Biden and Anthony Fauci may parent their children as they see fit; they will not dictate to me via mandate or any other means how to parent my child. God granted me parental rights, not the government. I respect myself and my child.

Speak Up. When it's your turn to speak, do it. Conflict is a natural part of life, don't be afraid of it. Don't be afraid of speaking the truth; the truth will set you free. When you have something to say, say it. Your voice matters. You set the tone for your child; if you have a healthy respect for yourself they'll follow suit. Teach them to protect themselves by using their voice. The time will come when you are faced with inevitable conflict; practicing using your voice in smaller ways will help you become comfortable with standing up for yourself (and your child!) when you need to. When you see something amiss, speak up. When you can offer assistance, speak up. Remember your value; remember that you were created with purpose.

Save for a Rainy Day. People often relate this euphemism to finances, but I mean it in a broader sense. Take good care of yourself; eat well, stay hydrated, and keep active. Stock up on supplies for your family, prepare for the unexpected, and be ready to protect yourself, your family, or anyone you love from a threat. Nothing woke me up faster to my own inefficiency than when my toddler got away from me at the park. It became obvious he was capable of sprinting a great distance in no time. I easily caught up with him, but it got me thinking that my growth as a parent must rival his. I must be ready for the day that he outruns me, especially if that day comes while his well-being still depends on me. This is true for all of us. We must not become complacent with our growth once we reach adulthood; especially in times like these where uncertainty has become currency. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

Do NOT Let Fear Drive. Fear serves a profound

purpose, but it does not belong to us. We are not meant to carry it with us everywhere we go or into every situation we face. Fear can keep us alert in times of danger, it can steer us away from suffering, but if we let it drive for too long, it can lead us astray and into places far worse than we imagine. Fear can fuel panic, panic and stress lead to rage, and rage leads to hatred. When we let fear consume our sound judgment we can fall prey to things like cult-like behavior and ruthlessness towards the innocent. Fear has been draped over this country like a dense fog; if we aren't careful we will reduce ourselves to the blind leading the blind... or worse to the blind blaming the blind for the fog. Keep your wits about you, don't let fear of the unknown control your capacity for empathy and compassion. Prepare where you can but don't forget to enjoy life while you've got it.

The America I knew in 2019 was all about convenience, pride, and materialism; everything was centered on taking the easy route. The America I see emerging in 2022 is all about connection, growth, and gratitude for what we had and have left. It's a strange new world we're in. We, as a people, are changing. I'm happy to report that my husband and I reconciled in 2021, after being separated for a year and six months. We didn't spend lockdown together the previous year; the time apart and uncertainty for the future taught us to be thankful for the "small things," to cherish time with loved ones, and to love without condition. We put our son first and by doing so have realized all our marriage needed was for each of us to strive to be our best self. Our country is so divided today that it's hard to imagine a future where we might agree on enough to get along. Maybe being our best selves can make all the difference right now. I hope at least in my own interactions I can make a positive difference where it counts; to be my best self as often as possible. At the end of the day, maybe we ourselves are who we can really count on. We can be our own examples of integrity, decency, and dignity. We can be our own heroes. We can give our kids hope to hold onto. Stay strong fellow Mama Bears, the future is as bright as we choose for it to be.



DEFEAT THE MANDATES

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VACCINATED
UNVACCINATED
DEMOCRAT REPUBLICAN
INDEPENDENT AMERICANS OF ALL RACES
BACKGROUND RELIGIONS
UNITED WE STAND
IN PEACE WE MARCH

1.23.2022 ★ WASHINGTON D.C.



Prepper's Corner

Emergency Preparedness

by Aaron M. Scullin, Hitched4fun.com

Part One - "Preparation = Peace of Mind"

Preparing for emergencies will bring you peace of mind. I write this article after years of experience preparing for, dealing with, and recovering from disasters. In my case, wildfires. Now you might be saying to yourself, what does the state of my mind have to do with emergency preparedness? Good question, let me share a little wisdom with you.

Ask anyone who has survived a disaster "well" will tell you that the first thing to go is your sense of control. That's what disasters do. They take your normal day to day life of security and dump it out on the ground. Big disasters not only do that but they stomp on all your belongings to the point of non-recognition. Your mind wants to lose it! STRESS. Everything you once thought was secure is gone. Now what do you do?

The above situation wreaks havoc on your brain. Actual physiological things go on. Stress hormones (i.e. cortisol) are released, your ability to focus on multiple things diminishes, you get tunnel vision, thoughts become disorganized. You lose fine motor skills. You forget things and constant worrying kicks in. Stress studies actually show a temporary drop of 1-2 grade levels in a person's cognition. For those who speak two languages, you might not be able to speak in your second language!

Preparation is a key to surviving "well." I want you and I to get through the disaster and be "well" on the other side. Wellness encompasses not only your physical wellbeing but your mental state too. Having essential items organized and prepared ahead of time keeps you physically alive. Having and following a plan, along with the control and security it brings to your brain, helps keep you mentally alive. Physical life plus a healthy mental state equals recovery! Are you with me now? I hope so.

Your next question might be, what do I prepare for? So many things threaten our peace today. Just watch the news for 10 minutes and see. We see wildfires, floods, power outages, hurricanes, all caused by mother nature. Then we see sinister things like wars, rioting disguised as peaceful protests, defunding police movements

leading to rampant crime, supply chain manipulation, mask mandates, small border towns being overrun by tens of thousands of illegal immigrants, etc. It seems to never end right?

Our nation is huge and diverse. The likely disasters I may face are probably totally different than yours. That's okay. I suggest you make a list of likely disasters you might face. Next, prioritize that list. See what comes out as the most likely thing to occur in your lifetime. Then make preparations to meet the needs of that situation. Add to your preparations any unique needs of the other situations on your list. The end result will be an "all hazard" preparedness approach for your unique situation.

Now your plan is not going to be perfect. That's okay. Don't worry. Any preparation ahead of time, will give you all the advantage when the worst goes



Below: Midland X-Talker
Two-Way Radios
Right page: emergency kit



1. Communication (Cellphone, Satellite inReach, Ham Radio, FRS/GMRS Two-Way Radio) – The importance of good communication can't be overstated. Don't be overconfident in traditional modes of communication. They are often first to go down due to physical damage or because of being overloaded with traffic. Do you have a primary and a backup means of getting help and or contacting your loved ones? Consider getting your own Amateur Radio License and radios or purchasing a couple Midland X-Talker Two-Way Radios (www.avantlink.com/click.php?tt=el&merchant_id=a5244fa8-925c-467f-9be2-485d671598dc&website_id=802cd7e5-3edd-43eb-84ce-fefc8106b2c7&url=https%3A%2F%2Fmidlandusa.com%2Fcollections%2Frv-two-way-radios). Will you need weather alerts? Check out the Midland ER40 E+Ready Emergency Weather Alert Crank Radio (www.avantlink.com/click.php?tt=el&merchant_id=a5244fa8-925c-467f-9be2-485d671598dc&website_id=802cd7e5-3edd-43eb-84ce-fefc8106b2c7&url=https%3A%2F%2Fmidlandusa.com%2Fcollections%2Frv-two-way-radios).

2. Navigation (Gaia GPS, Paper Map & Compass) – Look for a future article on my favorite cell phone app called Gaia GPS. Your cell phone contains a very powerful and accurate GPS. The Gaia GPS app unlocks the power of that GPS for your use. I never leave home without this app on my phone. With it, I also download maps for the area I'm headed to ahead of time. The app pinpoints my location on those maps. It's amazing. Click this link to get my exclusive affiliate discount off your Premium Annual Subscription www.gaiagps.com/discounts/?fp_ref=hitched4fun. I don't get lost and if something happens,

down. Let's get started. The first thing you will need is some sort of a "72 Hour + 2 weeks food Kit" containing all the immediate items you will need to survive your most likely scenario.

"72 Hour + 2 weeks food Kit"

Your kit might be a backpack, duffle bag, wheeled trash can, or a 5 gallon bucket(s), etc. Or these items might be stored in a bug out vehicle. The key is to have these items identified, collected, and ready to be used or taken with you at a moment's notice.

Aaron's 12 Essential Contents

Your kit will need items to meet the unique requirements of your identified scenarios. Regardless of your requirements, I have identified my top 12 essential contents you should be sure to have in your kit.



I know how to get around any obstacle between me and my destination. Don't forget about printed paper maps of your community, County, and State. Batteries go dead, phones get smashed. You need back ups. Buy and learn how to orient a map with a compass. It could save your life.

3. Sun & Bug Protection (Eyes & Body) – I became partially snow blind while skiing as a kid. It's no joke. You can sunburn your eyes. Our skin is very sensitive too. I've now had several skin cancer removal procedures and one skin grafting experience. That wasn't fun. I should have listened when I was younger. Lather up!! Or if you're like me and you don't like the slimy lotions, pack a long sleeve shirt and hat. Ask anyone who's been through a major earthquake where they slept the first week after the earthquake. They will say "outside"! They were way too scared to sleep in a structure for days. The aftershocks didn't help either. You're gonna be outside more than you're normally accustomed to. I promise you.

4. Insulation (Layers, Extra Clothing) – This is going to vary depending on the season and climate you are in. You don't have to be prepared for every weather event. Just be

ready to adjust up or down one level from what you are anticipating. If it's sunny most of the time, plan for wind or rain. If you expect rain a lot where you are, prepare for cold

rain, snow, etc. It can be as simple as throwing in a sweatshirt. Layering allows you to adjust to the environmental conditions gradually. Layering helps you adjust to each situation and not be miserable.

5. Illumination (Headlamp) – A headlamp or flashlight is a must have. Don't rely on your cell phone! Those batteries run out. You can't focus the beam, etc. Have extra batteries and or a way to recharge your lights.

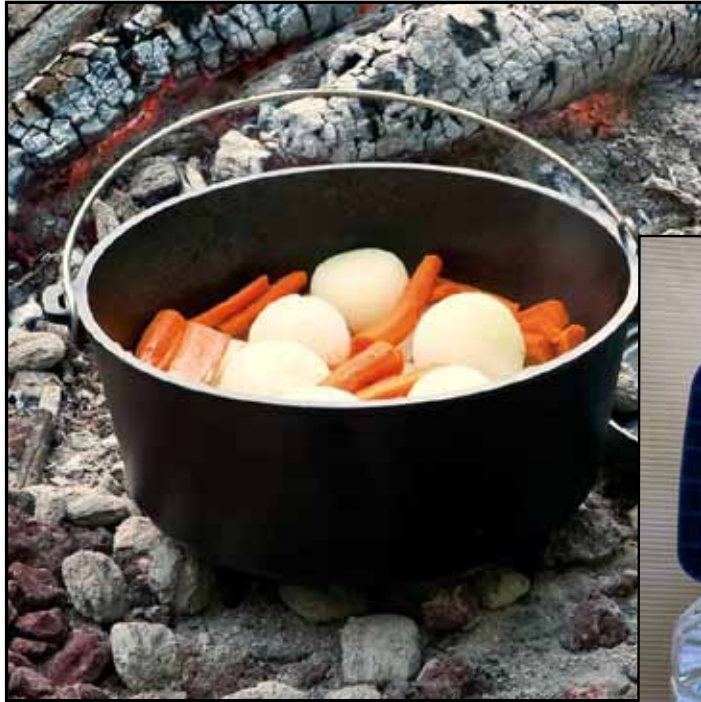
6. First Aid Kit – This should be obvious to everyone but it isn't. You must have some sort of first aid kit adapted to the scenario you anticipate. Someone is gonna be hurt or get an injury. Just plan on it.



By ~riley - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=20313045

Example - When my son and I backpacked the High Sierra Trail in California (about 80 miles over nine days) a few years ago we came across a medical doctor and his son. We were resting on the side of the trail eating a snack when they walked up to us. The dad who was a medical doctor had cut his finger to the bone the day before. They didn't have a first aid kit!! Not even one band aid. I couldn't

believe it. They had made a makeshift bandage from a piece of a dirty hiking sock and some tape. Talk about a perfect set up for infection. Yuck! Each one of us had our own first aid kit so we proceeded to “doctor him up.” We



Water bottle by RIsheehan - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=68581023

helped clean up the wound, apply antiseptic ointment, wrap with clean gauze, etc. If I remember correctly, we gave them extra supplies, told them to keep an eye on it for the remaining two days they had before they reached the trail head. I've reflected on that many times over the years since then. Maybe he was trying to get away from his “work” by leaving medical supplies home?? I get that, I don't like taking work with me but come on! Don't let this be you! Be prepared.

7. Fire – This can range from having waterproof matches to having a stove. Do you have a way to start a fire to stay warm, cook food, dry your clothes etc? My favorite cooking device is a Lodge Cast Iron Dutch Oven. Click here to see Dutch Ovens (www.hitched4fun.com/product-category/dutch-ovens-and-more/). I can cook anything in them. From pies, to breads, to stews and prime rib. All I need is the ingredients, the dutch oven, and some wood or charcoal. Scrap wood and things to build a fire with are always around. NO need for fuel canisters. They have been proven over hundreds of years by civil war veterans, mountain men, and pioneers on the plains. Campers

use them everyday all across this country. They are a must have. You can even boil / purify water for drinking in them.

8. Repair Kit & Tools – Can you change a tire? Do you have a spare tire? Can you fix your backpack? Do you have extra shoe laces? Think about what your scenarios include and what are the basic tools and supplies you might need for a repair in the field? This essential could also include extra gas/oil. What is likely to break? How will you make a temporary fix?? Sheltering in place may require different tools versus a bug out location.



9. Nutrition (Extra Food, 2 weeks of food) –

If things are bad, they are also going to be bad for our First Responders. Don't be a victim. You never know what a delay or breakdown in normal response will be. Maybe emergency supplies can't get to you? Maybe it's unsafe to leave your home to get to those supplies? Maybe panic purchasing will deplete the most basic food-stuffs? Remember what happened with toilet paper at the start of the COVID Pandemic! This

is especially important if you have a medical condition where a change in your diet could be dangerous like diabetes. Don't cause yourself grief. Plan a little extra. Nutrition could also include medications you might need. Don't forget that!

10. Hydration (Extra Water) – Yes extra water!! We all can live without food for a while but we can't live very long without water. Many states out west are very dry. Other states where water is more plentiful, can still dehydrate you quicker than you think. Remember Murphy's law. You're going to need that extra water sometime to drink, clean with etc. This essential could include a basic supply of water, plus a water filter or tablets to treat water around you for drinking. I even keep an emergency bottle in my truck that all I have to do is pour water into it. As I drink through the built in straw, it filters the water. How cool is that. Easy!

11. Emergency Shelter (Poncho, Etc.) – What can help you get out of the elements? Is that your vehicle? Is it a tent or poncho? A poncho can be an insulation layer and a shelter and it doesn't take up much room. It can also hold water and provide sun screening. In some scenarios you might need a tent. Others, a simple emergency blanket that's about 1 inch x 1 inch x 3 inches folded up is all that's needed. What about your pets? How will you contain them?? Do they need an emergency shelter too?

12. Defense (Knife, 9mm) – I wish this one wasn't a reality, but it is in my opinion. I'll just say there are more and more "interesting" two legged creatures roaming through our country these days. Four legged creatures will usually leave you alone. Most of the time you can remove yourself from a bad situation or avoid them. Sometimes you find yourself in situations you can't readily get out of.

It's nice having a little protection with you should the situation get out of hand. Most people you and I will meet are very nice. Rarely, I have had situations when the hair on my neck stands on end. Panicking and desperate two legged creatures can be unpredictable. I want to survive along with my loved ones as I'm sure you do too. At the very least, you should carry a knife. It can be used not only for defense, but to make kindling, cut hiking socks for a bandage like the doctor did, or to open things, and so on. So versatile.

I hope that this list has been helpful to you. You can and will recover "well" from the disasters in your life with a little effort now. I hope I've inspired you to start preparing today!! Look in the next issue of the American Liberty Magazine for Part 2 of my article, titled "Get Ready, Get Set, Go!"

Aaron M. Scullin



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PLACE IN A
FREE SOCIETY**

1.23.2022 ★ WASHINGTON, D.C.

Ask the

Grannies

with Grannie Beverly
& Grannie Charlotte



There are few things in life better than the love and support of an affectionate Grandma. One of those things is the love and support of *two* affectionate Grandmas: *Grannie Charlotte* and *Grannie Bev*! These two Grannies have led spectacular lives! Beyond an impressive and growing shared total of over 45 grandchildren and great-grandchildren, these two extraordinary women have lived some unique and awe-inspiring experiences together. From running a newspaper, operating an advertising/PR enterprise, to producing a Murder Mystery Dinner Theater, all the way to creating Naked Newt Skin Care, and once more, co-founding their famous Ice Chips Candy (as seen on ABC's SharkTank), Grannie Charlotte and Grannie Bev have made for one amazing team.

I could go on for hours about the accomplishments of both Beverly Vines-Haines and Charlotte Clary, they've each paved a trail of success independently. As a team, they've come together once again to bring us *Ask The Grannies*, a bi-monthly advice column answering our reader's most intimate, profound, endearing, and even humorous questions. We invite you to learn more about our Grannies by reading *Two Grannies in a Garage* by Beverly Vines-Haines and by visiting their websites: IceChips.com and NakedNewtSkinCare.com

Question 1: What are your favorite methods of coping with stress during these trying times?

Grannie Charlotte:

At this point in my life I should be old enough to know that all things are temporary, both good and bad. But some days I get caught up in the "bad" of it all. Being a rather practical person I catch myself and ask, "Is this a pity party or is it bigger than that?" Stress has a way of pressuring us when we feel we are not in control of a situation or do not have an immediate answer for a situation. The feeling of stress may be nothing more than the neglect of basic physical needs. I will drink water, eat fresh food, go for a walk and try to remember to take deep, cleansing breaths. The situation will still be there but my perspective will have changed a bit. Uplifting music certainly helps! I am also drawn to essential oil fragrances. Recently I watched a movie where a father was instructing a young son how to ice skate. He kept reminding him, "Never look down - always look forward! Simple truth there. Lyrics from a current worship song say, "Let go, my soul and trust in Him. The waves and wind still know His Name. I choose to look forward...

Grannie Bev:

My number one way to cope with our current culture is to stop watching the news! I also avoid social media comments from people I know to be negative or aggressive.

I don't avoid all news, of course. I'm aware of important and relative events. I simply refuse to give my time, my emotions, and my moods to endless Covid death counts, oft repeated social "dilemmas," and all the other manipulative and uncomfortable rants. Good music or a great book will serve all of us in a calming way.

Question 2: I'm being mandated to take the COVID Vaccine at my job, I'd rather not. If I quit my job, what can I do to earn an income? Would you have advice on starting a business? How can I start over?

Grannie Charlotte:

Don't quit your job quite yet. Stay calm and patient. Many employers are already regretting the loss of good employees over this mandate. Do your homework and look for available job opportunities that exist without the mandate. That may require looking outside your city, county or even a different state. In regards to starting a business; rarely does a person bring in a living wage as soon as they start a business. Yes, a business can be started "on a shoestring," but you have to live while investing even a shoestring in your new venture. With so many companies looking for workers, now may be the time to take on a few extra hours a week somewhere that is mandate free. Those few hours could become that shoestring you need to start that business!

Grannie Bev:

I'm a little soft on this answer. I chose to get the vaccine even though I neither trusted it nor wanted it. I am indeed a Grannie and I have seven children. Those children worried because of our age. Ultimately, we did it for them. Personally, I am very much a faith person. A Believer. While I would never test God by deliberately allowing a snake to bite me, I have enough faith to believe no harm will come to my body from the vaccine. So far, so good. As a Believer, I would not quit my job over this vaccine. But I wholly understand and support those who would. This mandate is another example of plundering our freedoms. Any new business, if this political assault progresses, would need to be related to survival in difficult times. When people are cold, hungry and exhausted, they will have little interest in the ridiculous things Wall Street has been shoving down our throats for decades. Be creative. If you've prepared, you will have methods and ideas to help others. You won't so much have to start a business as you'll need time to keep up with those who come to you for advice.

Question 3: My teenager is suffering from severe depression during these lockdowns and weird mandates being passed. Are there any tips you'd have as moms and grandmoms that you can give me? I'd like to do what's best for him but I can't change the school situation. I feel like I have no control over this situation.

Grannie Bev:

I think my children's mental health and love for life trumps any regulation or mandate thrown at us. I have felt for a long time it would be better if we adhered to less

restrictive rules for our children. We started this insanity saying we all had to protect the elderly. Fine. Except I think the elderly should protect themselves. We were certainly free to stay home, to avoid crowds and young people who might carry this virus. Survival of the fittest has worked for centuries. Herd immunity will never be achieved while we are so afraid of this virus we live as hermits. My advice is to trust your teenager. Outside activities with a level of protection and caution should be fine. I do not like the government's methods at all. I would not watch my child go into severe depression without finding ways to help him find hope for a better tomorrow.

Grannie Charlotte:

These times are hard on all of us, but particularly the young forming minds. I must ask, has he shut you and or the family out or can he still communicate some of his feelings to you? Allow him his space (After all he IS a teenager!) but also make sure he has interaction with you and the family. Do not force it, but plan so interaction happens. Include him and give him responsibilities when doing chores and fall clean up. Have him help you cook dinner. Let him plan a dinner. Get his honest opinion on a household project – paint color or throw rugs. Ask him to change burnt out light bulbs or take sister to the store. Pay him to vacuum your car. Teach him a card game. Kids today can't even shuffle a deck of cards! Here's a hard question – Is he immersed on his phone or device? THAT alone can send a teenager into depression. Is he doing video games from the moment he walks in the door till late at night? Only you can answer that. And only you can be the parent (not the friend) that he needs now more than ever.

Do you have a burning question on your mind? Please send an email to AskTheGrannies@AmericanLibertyMagazine.com to reach the Grannies...Thanks for reading!

BRIDGE BUILDING

by Liberty Steadfast

I just navigated a major project. Not an easy task these days. This was a corporate endeavor, involving setting up a sales booth at a holiday show. It's a large show, typically featuring several hundred booths. This event was cancelled in 2020. Ostensibly due to Covid-19.

Even without our relentless media's daily counts of cases, death numbers and the uber hyped variants, we knew it would be difficult to restart this type of public gathering. We would work with people who came from different positions on the myriad overblown issues that have so successfully divided America.

I had to work with a crew of people who on the surface could not agree on anything. The event was scheduled but there were daily warnings it could be cancelled at any moment. Actually, hearing the debates and arguments, I fully expected cancellation.

We had Covid. We had the Delta variant. We had Omicron. All vendors faced supply chain issues. We had arguments, differing views on masks, vaccinations, and safe sampling. If I hear the words, "an abundance of caution" one more time, I might give up. The rules for this event took pages of reading. Even our own partners wanted to throw in the towel when they heard proof of vaccination would be required to enter the show facility. That cut deeply into our expected crowds.

Following is a brief list of the hot button topics debated:

Masks for vendors
Social distancing
Vaccinations
Safe sampling

Masks for the public
How to control safe sampling
Vaccination cards
Washing stations

I had to work with a crew of people who on the surface could not agree on anything.

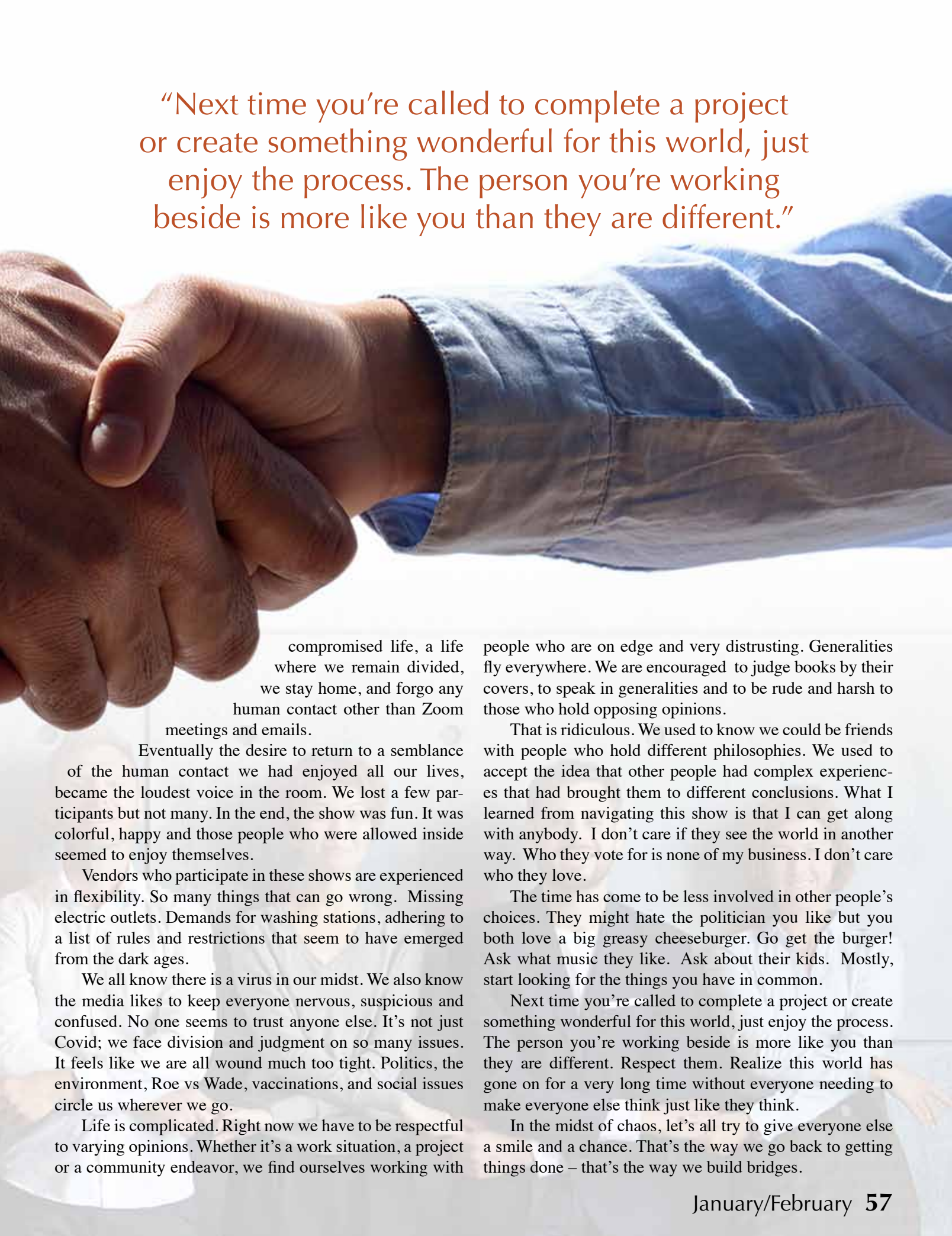
There were additional issues. The entire event almost collapsed once the "No entry without proof of vaccination" became a reality. New debates. Did it include children? What about the people with health issues who were not advised to get the shots?

It seemed even with all the negotiating and arguing, most people involved wanted the show to go on. I certainly did. I want to see our nation stop operating on a fear agenda. We need to get back to life. Back to festivals, sports activities, all the many interactions that make life worth living.

Since variants now pop up regularly, we need to learn to live again. It took creativity, luck and perseverance to bring this show to our community. In the initial planning, we came from many diverse and proudly held opinions.

As with most situations we all were forced to compromise a few things we wanted. Sadly, all this division has caused people to hunker down and embrace their philosophies aggressively. There were many who wanted to cancel the entire event. They were the "better safe than sorry," crowd. Others wanted to ditch the masks totally. They believed in "survival of the fittest."

At this point, I became convinced we had to find ways to work together or these shows would go the way of the dinosaurs. Too many people seemed willing to accept a



“Next time you’re called to complete a project or create something wonderful for this world, just enjoy the process. The person you’re working beside is more like you than they are different.”

compromised life, a life where we remain divided, we stay home, and forgo any human contact other than Zoom meetings and emails.

Eventually the desire to return to a semblance of the human contact we had enjoyed all our lives, became the loudest voice in the room. We lost a few participants but not many. In the end, the show was fun. It was colorful, happy and those people who were allowed inside seemed to enjoy themselves.

Vendors who participate in these shows are experienced in flexibility. So many things that can go wrong. Missing electric outlets. Demands for washing stations, adhering to a list of rules and restrictions that seem to have emerged from the dark ages.

We all know there is a virus in our midst. We also know the media likes to keep everyone nervous, suspicious and confused. No one seems to trust anyone else. It’s not just Covid; we face division and judgment on so many issues. It feels like we are all wound much too tight. Politics, the environment, Roe vs Wade, vaccinations, and social issues circle us wherever we go.

Life is complicated. Right now we have to be respectful to varying opinions. Whether it’s a work situation, a project or a community endeavor, we find ourselves working with

people who are on edge and very distrusting. Generalities fly everywhere. We are encouraged to judge books by their covers, to speak in generalities and to be rude and harsh to those who hold opposing opinions.

That is ridiculous. We used to know we could be friends with people who hold different philosophies. We used to accept the idea that other people had complex experiences that had brought them to different conclusions. What I learned from navigating this show is that I can get along with anybody. I don’t care if they see the world in another way. Who they vote for is none of my business. I don’t care who they love.

The time has come to be less involved in other people’s choices. They might hate the politician you like but you both love a big greasy cheeseburger. Go get the burger! Ask what music they like. Ask about their kids. Mostly, start looking for the things you have in common.

Next time you’re called to complete a project or create something wonderful for this world, just enjoy the process. The person you’re working beside is more like you than they are different. Respect them. Realize this world has gone on for a very long time without everyone needing to make everyone else think just like they think.

In the midst of chaos, let’s all try to give everyone else a smile and a chance. That’s the way we go back to getting things done – that’s the way we build bridges.

Home Town Recipes by Aaron M. Scullin

Dutch Oven Apple Spice Cobbler

I have enjoyed a lifetime love for camping. My earliest childhood memories involve the family car or truck being hitched up to a boat, camp trailer, or 5th wheel and the FUN adventures that followed. Hitching up the old car or truck equaled FUN!! I bet that's true for you too!! Don't you just smile when you hitch up your boat or trailer?? Thanks mom and dad!!

Why do you camp? I bet you do for a number of reasons. Some of my reasons include my love of being with my family and friends (away from work), to enjoy the healing and relaxing qualities of nature, and my thrill for adventure! Maybe you haven't really camped before or you had a bad first experience and have been scared to try again. Don't worry! Don't give up! You can do it.

Like I explained before, I've been camping my whole

below: Aaron enjoying his
Apple Spice Cobbler



life. I've had a lot of good experiences and a handful of challenges along the way. Boy, I could tell you any number of funny experiences looking back regarding food in the outdoors. Every camp out involves food right? Good food, lack of food, or bad food impacts your entire trip.

Lack of food – At age 12, my Scout Master taught me so much through hunger on a 50 mile backpacking trip. Breakfast was one oatmeal packet and one hot chocolate pack. If we were lucky, you might get a box of raisins to enhance the meal. Lunch was one cheese and crackers package and a small peanut M&Ms. Dinner, well it was what I would compare to first-generation freeze-dried space food. Yuck, bad food! We spent the whole week talking (complaining) and dreaming about food. We caught and ate every fish we could get our hands on. As grown men, we scouts still talk and joke about that week. Over the years, I've come to the conclusion that our Scout Master was wiser than we thought. His secret plan must have been to make us all want to cook for ourselves. It worked!

I now say, if you're going to camp, eat GOOD FOOD! I didn't say eat difficult to make food. I've got a secret to share with you. You can cook just about anything you can cook at home in camp. Want to know how? It's in a camp gadget called a "Dutch Oven." They have been around for several hundred years.

A Dutch Oven was most assuredly one of the most



valuable items to own right up there with a horse, gun, sturdy bedroll, and a gold pan! Due to their versatility, early Colonists and settlers, hunters, trappers, and campers of all types found them to be a most useful utensil. Today, the States of Idaho and Utah lead the Nation in Dutch Oven use. Give it a try!!

I suggest you stick with one of the best brands like Lodge Cast Iron. You get what you pay for. \$50-\$150 depending on size. If taken care of, these ovens will out-live you! Put them in your "Will." I inherited my 3rd Great Grandmother's oven who was born in 1857. Talk about cool, it's fun making a meal in it for my family knowing she did the same in it over 100 years ago!!

Well what about you? The new Dutch Oven cook in camp. For the average family I recommend a Lodge Cast Iron Camp Dutch Oven 12 Inch (6 Quart) [Click here for link] like I started with. They retail for about \$103.00 each. "Camp" means the oven has three legs. This is a must for using charcoal and outdoor cooking. You can cook over coals, on a rack in your house oven, or over a stove burner. Most any family sized main/side dish or desert will fit in it. Practice at home before camping. It's not cheating, it's practicing. I do it all the time. Especially with a new recipe. I'm a scientist, I test and measure meals on my family at home before we try them in camp. I want GOOD FOOD!

Next, make sure you have a good set of hot pads or

gloves – You'll only pick up an iron lid barehanded once! Ouch! Of course, I'm not speaking from experience. Ha ha.

Consider where and how to set up your cook station. This can be as simple as spreading out aluminum foil on bare ground to cook on, to a large round oil changing pan (new, of course) with your charcoal and oven placed in it, or to the coveted Lodge Outdoor Cooking Table. Start simple and build your collection over time. Other items you might want include; a sturdy metal spoon, spatula, lid lifter, and a charcoal starter.

Okay, your brand-new Dutch Oven(s) has just arrived from UPS/USPS. You ran inside after grabbing it from the driver and tore open the box like Christmas morning and you're excited to cook something. Well here is an old Hitched4fun.com favorite. It's nearly impossible to screw up. I've tested this over many years with well over 100 young scouts. It's a hit! If they can successfully make it, you can too.

Easy first recipe – Cobbler

Continued on next Page

History lesson – *Abraham Darby is credited with patenting his own method for making smooth cast iron pots and kettles in 1704 after visiting Holland to inspect their process for casting brass vessels. Some say Dutch traders or salesmen coined the name. Others credit Dutch settlers in Pennsylvania who used cast iron pots. No matter who made them, they are great!*



Home Town Recipes *Apple Spice Cobbler*

Continued from Page 59

Ingredients:

2 Cans apple pie filling (or Fruit of Choice)
1 Box of dry cake mix
1 Stick of butter
(Favorites include 2 cans of apple filling with spice cake or 2 cans of peach filling with yellow cake.)

Directions:

Preheat household oven to 350 degrees or light approx. 25 charcoal briquettes.

Line Dutch oven bottom and sides with aluminum foil (for easy cleanup. Purists cringe hearing about foil in an oven, but you're new, who cares)

Spread fruit evenly over foil

Spread dry cake mix evenly over fruit (do not mix cake)

Cut slices of butter and evenly distribute over the dry cake mixture.

Place in preheated household oven for about 20-30 minutes

Or

Use white hot briquettes – 13 evenly distributed on bottom and 12 evenly distributed on top cook for about 20-30 minutes. Rotate the oven a quarter turn and spin the lid a quarter turn every 10 minutes or so to eliminate hotspots. You'll know when it's done when all of the dry cake mix has become wet (due to bubbling/boiling fruit and melting butter) and is slightly browned.

Serve with a scoop of vanilla ice cream. Yum!!!!

Are you a visual learner? Want to see how to make this? Watch my YouTube cobbler video! [Click here for link] I hope I've inspired you to give Dutch Oven cooking a try. In March of 2018, I embarked on a new adventure. I opened our online retail business called Hitched4fun.com. I have always dreamed of combining my passion for the outdoors, helping others and having fun! It finally happened. I don't sell anything that I'm not passionate about. Feel free to reach out to me with questions at sales@hitched4fun.com. I want you to have fun cooking outdoors! We offer high quality and reasonably priced products that add fun and uniqueness to your campsite day or night.

Aaron M. Scullin, Owner Hitched4fun.com.



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I got picked up a few minutes later by a husband and wife heading west from their jobs on an oil field. We discovered a mutual love for movie trivia and talked about the places we'd been and their connections to film. The roof of their truck was covered in morale patches: "I lubricate my gun with LIBERAL TEARS," "A**@#!% Brigade," "100% Anti-Snowflake." It reminded me of stuff I've seen military buddies post online. The man was a retired cop.

We passed an RV parked in a field next to the highway. The side was painted red, white, and blue and said Biden.

Needless to say he had a few choice words that suddenly interrupted the conversation. He was visibly angered. A couple beats passed in awkward silence.

They took me to a truck-stop in Sydney, Nebraska. I thanked them for the ride as they let their dog, Charlie, out for a potty break. I went inside to use the restroom. I ran into the man as I was coming out.

"Me and the wife wanted you to have this," he said, shaking my hand and slipping me a \$50. "We think what you're doing is really cool. We hope you write about it someday!"

I wandered through town that night looking for a place to crash. I found it in a crumpled semi cab next to some train tracks. The engine block was completely gone and the driver's side was mangled, but there was a mattress in the back and I laid out on my sleeping bag.

I thought about the wide variety of characters I'd met over the course of the trip thus far. I thought about my girlfriend and our dogs back in Mexico.

A train screamed by and rattled the cab.

Eventually I fell asleep.

Kansas

"With Jim dead and the house gone, I'm just...I'm...Oh God, I don't know what I am or what I'm doing anymore..." Georgia hitched, and started crying. I held her in a hug. The car smelled of weed, must, and puppies. The backseat was piled high with things she'd saved from her home in Oregon before the wildfires burned it. She and her Chihuahua puppies, Sparky and Speedy, made it out with only hours to spare. Her husband Jim died in that home, their home, six weeks prior after a hard-fought battle with cancer. Georgia was heading to Iowa to stay with her stepdaughter.

Mike, a long-time hobo and our other companion, was drinking and watching TV in the hotel room.

"Everything's so screwed!" Georgia cried. She pulled away, eyes red with tears and smoke, errant strands of gray hair floating and suspended about her head. "Seriously, what do I do?"

"You keep doin' what you're doing," I said. "You've got a plan and you're sticking to it. What else can you do?"

Mike had spotted me first. It was the day after I slept in the wrecked semi cab. I'd been flying a sign in front of the truck stop all day when I saw him walking towards me from the parking lot. I knew he was a traveller. He had a gnarly red beard, shoulder-length hair, a guitar case in hand, and a rucksack riding high on his shoulders. "Any luck?" His voice was gruff and his face was worn—a man who's spent a lot of time in the open air and beneath a blazing sun.

"Not yet." He didn't ask my name, so I didn't ask his. A lot of people on the



road are trying to escape something. Crime, responsibility, themselves. The past doesn't matter out there. People volunteer what they want about themselves when they want to, if they want to. In this brave new world where we're bombarded with everything from pictures of stranger's meals to their reactionary politics, the road is a place of welcomed silence and genuine human connection. "Been here since last night."

"Here?"

"Not this exact spot. Sydney."

"Have you tried the Wally World [Walmart] on the other side of town?"

"I didn't even know there was one."

"Follow me." I picked up my ruck. "I'm gonna show you the hobo credit card."

Mike was a full-time vagabond, traveling simply because he could. He'd been as far south as Panama and crisscrossed the continental US on freight trains. We shared this and other anecdotal adventures as we walked. My spiritual beliefs are esoteric at best, but I strongly believe in the power of stories. They unite, encourage, enlighten, comfort, counsel, entertain...if that's not something holy, I don't know what is.

My sign said "West," but Mike's said "Traveling - Need ride - Will work for food." People leaving "the Walton Palace" gave money. Humans are strange. If you outright ask for money you're a bum asking for handouts, but if you ask for work or food they're likely to give cash. It felt weird to me—I had what I needed, fiscally, and all I genuinely wanted was to get from A to B—but I admired my companion's efforts to get what he wanted: beer money.

"This'll get us a six pack of something nice," he said ten minutes later. We got some IPA from a gas station and went back to the truck stop. We drank in the shade on a grassy lawn. Watching people come and go, enjoying a cold beer on a hot summer day, making new friends...I was a thousand miles from home and where I wanted to be, dirty, living out of my pack, and I'd never been better.

Georgia came over later, carrying Sparky and Speedy in their tiny doggie bed. She'd been napping in the car. She'd picked up Mike hitchhiking somewhere further west as he was trying to get away from the coast. Wildfires were destroying the western states, and the sky above us was the flat metallic gray of apocalypse films, filtering the sun's rays so everything looked yellow and faded. Somewhere in the ash circling overhead was Georgia's house and the homes of hundreds of thousands of others.

They were heading for Ellis, Kansas. Before she and her late husband moved west they'd worked for a hotel there, piecing their lives back together after they were shattered by poverty and drug use. It was the first place they'd been happy, she said, and she wanted to see their old friends and before embarking on the rest of her life's journey without him. The Catholic church there helped travelers and bought them Greyhound tickets when they could. They might be able to get me to El Paso, she said, and from there I could cross the border. It was a tight fit, but I just managed to squeeze myself into the back of the car.

It was a long drive and I took over when Georgia got tired. We got to Ellis at 2:00 a.m. and the hotel desk manager recognized Georgia immediately, pulling her in for a great hug. With her reward points, Georgia was able to get us a couple free nights.

It was one of the nights when she and I retreated to her car to talk. I know a thing or two about tragedy, and I hate seeing people suffer—especially by themselves. She'd been nothing but kind—an eccentric, broken, nurturing angel of the road. People who hurt the most want to give back to others. Sometimes they give hate; a pointless offering they think will alleviate suffering but only breeds more.

Sometimes they give help and kindness; that breeds more of the same too.

"You're going to get through this, G." I said. "Look at where you are now. You don't have Jim, but you've got the pups, and you've got your old friends." I looked out the window, trying to think of something more. "And you've got new friends, too." I smiled at her. "Change is inevitable. Death is coming for all of us. We don't get to decide when that happens. We only get to decide what we do before it arrives. You're an amazing person, Georgia, and I've only known you for a couple days but you've already changed my life. I know you're hurt, and that's fine. You're allowed to feel sad, especially in a situation like yours, but you're not allowed to give up. Too many people are rooting for you—I'm one of them—if we're gonna be here for you when you're down, you gotta be strong enough to keep going for us."

"What if I don't know how to be strong?"

"You're here now, aren't you? Handle it the way you have been. One day at a time, one foot in front of the other. That's the strongest thing anyone can do."

She wiped her tears. "Thank you."

"Thank you."

Colorado to New Mexico

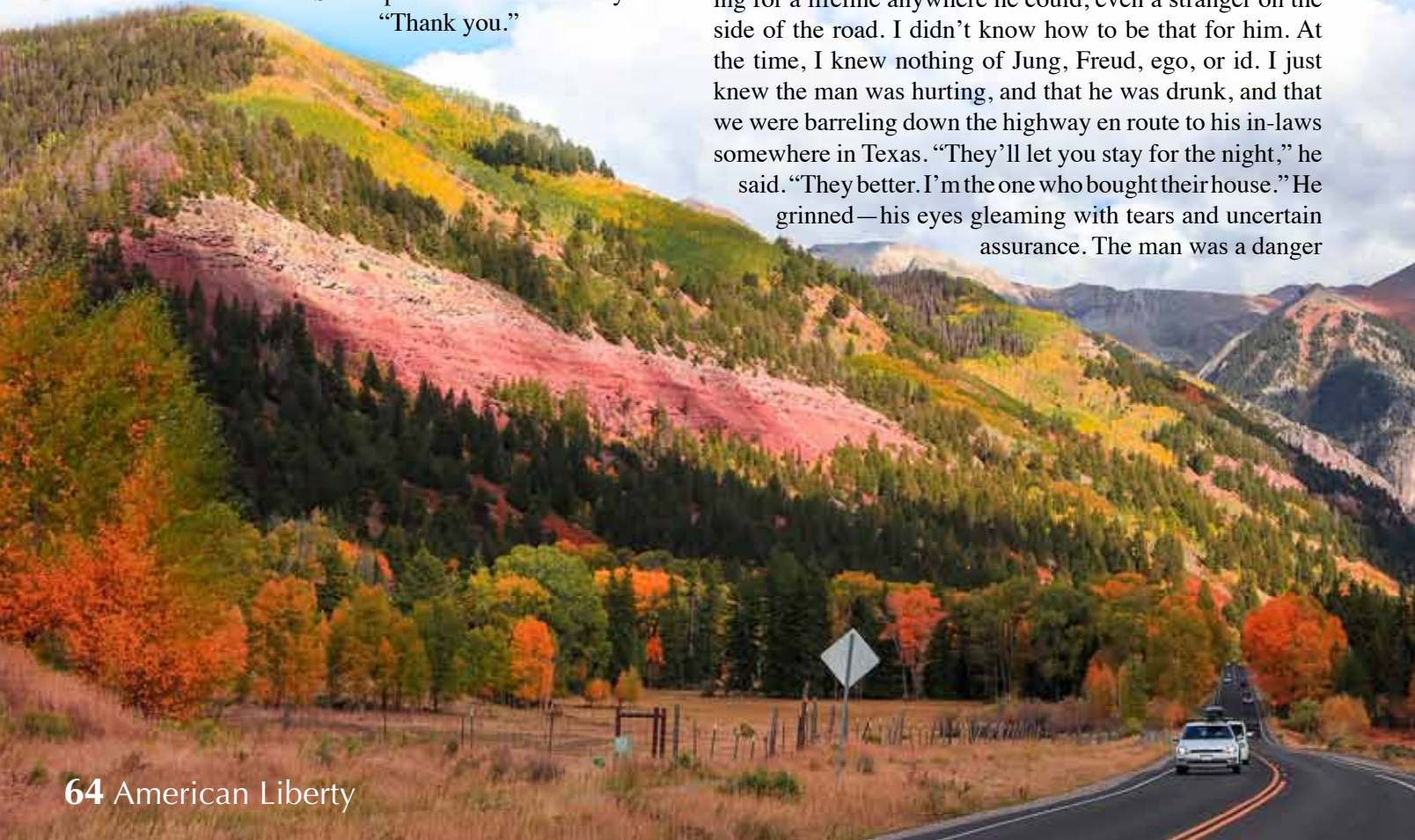
"He died on the way to the hospital." He took another swig of vodka; the cheap kind from gas stations that comes in plastic bottles. "So, you know, at least he didn't die in the house..." He wiped his nose with the back of his hand. "That was six months ago. That was the start of the end of my marriage."

My heart bled for the man—it's not easy taking a life—but fear, the selfish self-preservation kind, was starting to take hold. I should've gotten out at the last gas station.

Most of my rides came from drunks or stoners. I think it was either Freud or his estranged pupil, Jung, who said inebriation breaks down the barriers between the ego (reality) and the id (instincts), allowing our innate impulses to come through via access to the higher self. For some, this

means the base emotions like anger or sadness, in others it manifests in introspection, and for others it means openness and connection to others—like the urge to help.

But this man...this man needed someone. He was reaching for a lifeline anywhere he could, even a stranger on the side of the road. I didn't know how to be that for him. At the time, I knew nothing of Jung, Freud, ego, or id. I just knew the man was hurting, and that he was drunk, and that we were barreling down the highway en route to his in-laws somewhere in Texas. "They'll let you stay for the night," he said. "They better. I'm the one who bought their house." He grinned—his eyes gleaming with tears and uncertain assurance. The man was a danger



to everyone on the road, ourselves included, but I couldn't bring myself to be mad. I just wished he'd pull over.

I'd offered to drive at the gas station where we stopped and he got a few more boot-bottles of vodka.

"Can you drive stick?" He asked.

"Well...in theory."

"Nah, we'll be okay." He smiled, caught somewhere between a joke and breakdown. "I'm good."

And for a while, he was. Then he told me about the man who broke into his home, the home he shared with his wife and two daughters. My driver was a single engine pilot, and a conceal carry instructor.



"He was in the hallway between the laundry room and the living room, where I was. My wife and kids were in bed. I heard him coming through the laundry room window and I peaked around the corner. He had something in his hand—I didn't know what it was. I thought it was a gun. I didn't know..." We swerved, and I grabbed for the wheel as he was correcting. "Whoa, don't worry guy! I got this." He elbowed my shoulder. "We're good!"

I don't think you are, buddy.

"And then, I, uh...I shot him. I shot him in the dark. Center mass." He sipped the vodka. "He had a crowbar. He died on the way to the hospital."

He started crying, and I asked him to pull over. He shook his head, but he did slow down.

"I'll be alright. Besides, we gotta get you to Mexico, eh?" He elbowed my shoulder again, took a swig. "So, you know, at least he didn't die in my house..."

He needed something from

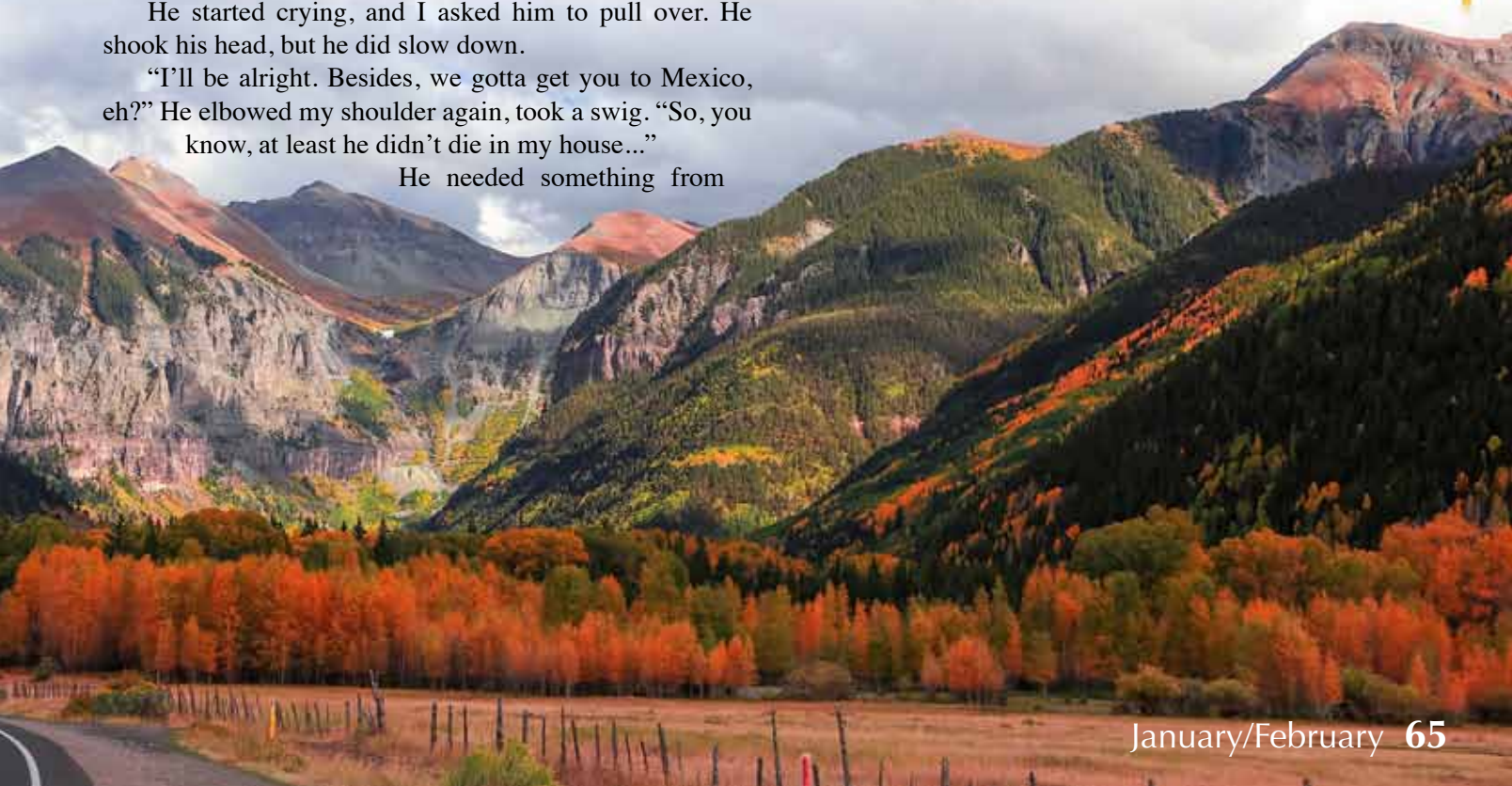
someone, anyone, and I was the only person there, but I didn't know what to offer a man who's taken a life. Some of my friends had—they have confirmed kills in Iraq and Afghanistan—but I'd never pulled the trigger in combat. I've never taken life. I just know it weighs on you.

"You didn't kill him out of spite," I said. "It wasn't murder. And, like you said, you didn't know what he had in his hand. You just knew he'd broken in and your family was inside."

He sniffed and kept his eyes straight on the road. "Uh-huh." I went on. "That's not murder." Important distinction. "And in a dark hallway, all you knew was he had something in his hand, possibly a weapon. And he was in your house. With your kids. That's a really, really crappy situation to find yourself in. That demands immediate action. My first team leader used to say a bad decision now is better than a good one later, because if you don't act, the other guy will. And that might mean you die. If he'd killed you he could've killed your family...You had no way of knowing what his intentions were, but considering he broke into your home they weren't good. You did the best you could've given the situation."

He wiped his eyes again but didn't say anything.

"Firearms are tools," I continued. "You're a CC instructor. I know you know this. Tools with a very specific function. They weren't meant to put holes in paper or plink iron down range. They're meant to kill things from a distance. Carrying one means you're willing to take that responsibility should the situation ever arise. You did the right thing—the hard thing—and as an instructor, you're now uniquely qualified to tell people the consequences of pulling the trigger. Most people don't think like that when they buy a pistol or rifle or whatever." I paused, wanting



to make sure I ended my point carefully. “You’re not a bad man,” was all I could manage. “You’re not a murderer.”

He stared ahead, taking it in. His mouth opened as if to say something, then he shrugged, nodded, and took a drink. “Thank you.”

We got pulled over just across the New Mexico state line. I held my hands over the sun roof of his jeep as the state highway patrol talked to him. A cop walked over to the passenger side door.

“Your buddy’s going to jail!” He yelled. “You need to find another [expletive removed] ride!”

I grabbed my ruck from the backseat and set off the direction we’d just come—walking down the median of an eight lane highway, towards an exit we’d passed half a mile back. Passing the first of three squad cars—the original one that’d pulled us over—I saw the driver sitting in the backseat, looking at his lap with tears running down his cheeks. He didn’t look up as I passed. I don’t know what became of him.

Mexico

I made it to Belen, New Mexico that evening and spent two full days there, just trying to get out. I finally got picked up by a trucker heading to El Paso, Texas. It was there that I paid for my first and only motel room of the trip. My arms were beat red. They’d later blister.

I had my passport and crossed into Mexico the next day. I stayed two nights with my girlfriend’s sister and brother-in-law, doctors living and practicing in Juarez. By the time I made it to Hermosillo, mine and my girlfriend’s home, exactly three weeks had passed since I first left South Dakota. Those three weeks changed my life, for better and for worse.

Postscript: Ohio

My girlfriend and I drifted apart after I got back. I went back to Ohio to find a better paying job than writing and to give us some space apart.

I’m writing this in Ohio now. Afghanistan fell a few weeks after I got back, and my best friend from the army, Ritchie, died less than a

week later. Within days I’d lost a war and a brother. Something inside me caved. Nothing is the same.

I ended our relationship, and it was the hardest break-up of my life. I’d never broken a heart before—not of someone I loved so much. But the journey and the losses changed me, my priorities shifted, and I realized a lot of things about myself and my feelings for her. I’d always wanted to do something crazy like dirty-kid across the country, but I didn’t stop to consider what it would do to me as a person. The trip was like the military in that regard. We imagine what it’ll be like to be in it but never consider who we’ll be after it’s all over.

Ultimately, the only
thing
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My trip taught me a lot and there were other people who helped me out on my trip, great ones. After leaving Kansas I made it to Denver where I crashed with some friends I’d made working in Alaska a couple years prior. (Alaska was where I found myself after a mental breakdown and failed suicide attempt. They were among the first friends I made after I decided I wanted to live.) They, and all my

friends, mean more to me than I could ever put into words. I love them dearly, but to those three I’m especially grateful for sharing their floors, sofas, and hearts. I hope all of you read this, and I hope you know I love you.

For every American reading this—veteran, active duty, civilian—I want you to know, we’ve got it within us to be better than the demons and prejudices of our past or any blindness of our present. I struggle with these things, but I’m actively working to change. None of us know what the other’s going through—not really. If we remember to judge people by the content of their character and not their skin color, be mindful of people’s situations in life, be generous in thought and deed, be open to making new friends and above all else be compassionate and uplift those whose mind, heart, body or soul is broken then America will be the greater for it. Ultimately, the only thing we can do is treat each other as we would hope to be treated – and to be treated for what we truly are....Human.

Bold, passionate, broken, wonderful people.

Thank you for reading.

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