

Arizona Black – Chapter 1

We were doing a little rock climbing in the Red Rock area of Sedona, Arizona. I was just reaching up for the next handhold when I heard the rattles. My hand came down a lot faster than it went up.

“Is that a rattlesnake?”

“Sounded like one and I’m not going to put my hand back up to find out.”

“We can go up over there. Maybe you can get a look and see which kind it is.”

“That’s good because we’re sure not going up here.”

“I see it David, what kind do you think it is?”

“I’m not 100% sure... I’d guess the Arizona Black Rattlesnake. It’s about the right size and coloring. Big, though... about three feet.”

“I’m going to get a picture with my cell phone. We can look up the snake when we get home.”

“I ought to just kill it.”

“No, it’s not a threat, now. They help to keep down the rodent population. I’ve got the shot, can we go home now?”

“Do you to stop somewhere for supper, Lynn?”

“I have supper in the crockpot. It’s an experiment, I’m making chili.”

Later...

“That wasn’t half bad. You soaked the beans, huh?”

“Yes and mixed the beans, onion, raw meat and spices and left it on low for about 8 hours. After I clean the table, I’m going to look up that snake we saw.”

“Here, read this.”

According to Wright and Wright (1957), adults grow to an average length of 78-109 cm. Klauber (1997) reports the maximum length to be less at 1,032 mm, with the smallest gravid female measuring 701 mm. The color pattern consists of a dark grayish, brownish black, reddish brown, or blackish ground color, overlaid with a dorsal pattern of blotches that are rectangular anteriorly, becoming subhexagonal posteriorly, eventually becoming crossbands just before the tail. However, specimens also may be

a uniform dark color without any clear dorsal pattern, or the dorsal blotches may be even darker and bordered with white, cream, or yellow transverse rows of scales, or the color pattern may be quite pale with a significant amount of yellow mixed in. A postocular stripe is evident in lightly colored specimens, but not so much in darker ones.

“I said three feet and three feet is a little over 90cm. It was an average size snake.”

“Maybe, but we were five miles from the car when we saw the snake and I wasn’t picking up a cell tower. We’d have had to walk some ways before we could have gotten help if you hadn’t yanked your hand back. Do you regret living in Bridgeport rather than Sedona?”

“Not really. That was a pipe dream inspired by that author who wrote about living alternatively in Holbrook and Sedona. He mentioned in one of his later stories that one of his amigos actually ended up in Prescott Valley. In my opinion, he’ll probably stay in Palmdale until he dies.”

“Is that what influenced some of your decisions when we went about getting prepped?”

“Only to an extent. As far as our gun collection goes, we sort of have what he liked. We each have collector’s editions of the 9422 plus a single-six. We went with Colt SAA revolvers, however. I have the Cavalry model and the Gunfighter model while you have the Artillery model. It was pleasing to find a pair of the 24” barrel legacy models in .45 Colt. Had we known that Winchester was going to fold up, I might have suggested buying more.

“But we didn’t and switched to battle rifles. I hope that you’re as happy with your loaded M1A as I am with my Super Match. We couldn’t have done that if we weren’t both working, hadn’t started our family or if I hadn’t read that comment TOM made about the M-25.”

“What did he say?”

“His objection to the White Feather M-25 was the lack of iron sights. It saved us a bunch when I decided to take his advice and step back to the M-21. It paid for the scope I put on your loaded.”

“You were at first looking at the M-21 and said it was the same mechanism as the Super Match. Why didn’t you go with the M-21?”

“Would you believe that it was because they had a Super Match available and there was a waiting period on the M-21?”

“Couldn’t wait, huh?”

“It was also less expensive and helped pay for even more of the cost of my scope. As far as the adjustable stock went, I added a leather cheek rest and it works just fine. I bought us a pair of identical shotguns.”

“Yeah, with bayonets.”

“They’re just out. The model is 590A1 SPX – 9 Shot. That’s where I got the idea for the scope I bought for your loaded. Mossberg puts the Barska 6-24x60mm Variable Scope on some of their rifles.”

“But why did you insist on buying me a .45ACP? It’s a real handful.”

“You can handle it, can’t you?”

“Now, yes. I was wondering after the first shot.”

“Para Ordinance makes good pistols. In fact, I have two on order.”

“Really? What?”

“Warthogs. They’re a compact .45ACP that have 10 + 1. Since I was in the store, I ordered 2,000 rounds of Lawman Cleanfire and another 1,000 rounds of 230gr Gold Dot. It’s for the Warthogs and it is Gold Dot short barrel ammo with a little less recoil. I like that because of the size of the Warthog. A Glock fan would have Glock 21 and a Glock 30. Since I don’t like Glock and do like Para Ordinance, this is about equal.”

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With two incomes and little expense attributed to raising children, Lynn and I were trying to get our prepping out of the way. Prepping is God awful expensive and the firearms were one of the larger expenses because of our choices. Or in certain cases my choices. It would only require the acquisition of one more firearm and we could move on to other preps. We had the minimal LTS food supply, two 1-year Deluxe Walton Feed selections plus a fair amount of double bought sales items in can racks or on shelves in the basement. We had a selection of radiological instruments from Arrow Tech that Lynn had purchased. Her approach had been amusing. She called Arrow Tech and the conversation went something like this:

“Arrow Tech.”

“Radmeters4U?”

“No ma’am, they’re in Texas. However we sell similar equipment. What were you looking for?”

"A low range Geiger counter, a 500 Rad Survey meter and a 500 Rad remote Survey meter."

"Are you trying to purchase 'The Package' with recommended extras?"

"Yes, thank you. Do have a package?"

"No ma'am, but I'm sure we can meet your needs."

"Well good. After I talk to you I have to call the other place and order an AMP-200."

"Ma'am, you must have mixed the numbers up. We're the other place and the AMP-200 is a product we sell. What did you want for dosimeters?"

"Some little ones and some big ones. You know 200 millirad and 200 Rad. Plus the whatchamacallit."

"The charger?"

"Right."

"How many of each size?"

"Four; I think we should have spares. And we should have a low range handheld meter, a medium range handheld meter, a medium range remote meter and a high range remote meter."

"Please define low range and medium range, if you can."

"CD V-700 and CD V-715."

"We can match the ranges but the meters will be new, not old meters from the sixties."

"And cost an arm and a leg, I'll bet."

"Our prices are competitive."

"I'll bet. How much?"

"How are you going to pay?"

"AMEX ok?"

"We accept AMEX and prefer it for large purchases."

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“So anyway, the stuff will be here in three days. I ordered it 2-day air.”

“How much?”

“Less than your fancy rifle.”

I should have said, “What fancy rifle?” however I said, “You knew about that?”

“Knew about what?”

“The fancy rifle I ordered.”

“You ordered ANOTHER rifle?”

“It’s the last one.”

“Don’t tell me you ordered one of those Accuracy International rifles that cost jillions.”

“It’s not an AW-50. It’s a Tac-50.”

“Where are they made?”

“Phoenix.”

“Phoenix, Arizona?”

“Gee, I hope so. The only other Phoenix that comes to mind is Jimmy Stewart’s rebuilt airplane.”

“What are you talking about?”

“The Flight of the Phoenix.”

“What’s that?”

“A movie that came out around 1965. The theme song was ‘Senza Fine’ (Without End/Never Ending)

“I never saw that.”

“My Dad loved that song. He thought highly of Jimmy Stewart too because of his service during World War Two. The version in the movie was sung by Connie Francis. Anyway, the answer to your question is Phoenix, Arizona. McMillan Brothers build a .50 caliber sniper rifle they call the Tac-50. They sell just the rifle or a package deal. I ordered the package deal and saved a substantial sum over something like a Barrett or an Accuracy

International rifle. In general terms the Barrett and Accuracy rifles run about one minute of angle while the Tac-50 is about equal to my Super Match and guaranteed to shoot ½ MOA. You can buy me a magazine for my birthday and Christmas and I'll try to buy a little ammo once in a while."

"How expensive is the ammo?"

It's Hornady 750gr A-MAX Match and runs about fifty-one dollars for ten rounds."

"Fine. You buy your rifle and I'm going to buy a horse. It's going to be a purebred stallion that costs as much as your new rifle."

"We live in town."

"I'll board it."

"But..."

The look Lynn gave me cut my protest off after the single 'but'. I forgot to ask ahead of time, I guess I owed her one. I hope she doesn't figure out that the rifle cost \$9,999 plus \$206 for the McCann Night Vision Rail Mount, \$50 for the scope upgrade, \$2,350 for the Jet Suppressor, \$200 for the tax stamp and sales tax. \$12,605 plus \$1,172.27 Phoenix sales tax plus the tax stamp for a total of \$13,977.27. I'd have to save up to buy ammo. If she asks, I'm going to tell her the truth... the rifle cost \$9,999. Details...

"How much?"

"\$9,999."

"Sales tax?"

"Nine point three percent."

"So, uh, \$10,928.21?"

"Sounds about right."

"That enough to get me a good horse, show tack and a hand tooled rifle scabbard. You could have saved eleven grand if you'd just asked. What now, the shelter or the generator?"

"I suppose the shelter. I'll get a 12'x50' culvert and bury it. It should have a coat of tar on it and the inside painted. Figure about nine thousand for the pipe plus the excavation. I can put a floor in it leaving four feet of space below the floor for a waste water tank that can be pumped to the septic system. We'll checkout the well and see if we need a new one."

“What else did you buy?”

“What makes you believe that I bought anything else?”

“How much was the scope?”

“\$50.”

“Un-huh. Extra magazines?”

“It came with one extra, no charge.”

“Night scope?”

“Didn’t get one. The rail mount cost \$206.”

“Two fifty six. What else?”

“A suppressor, \$2,350.”

“Plus tax stamp?”

“Uh, yes.”

“I didn’t just fall off a turnip truck you know. How much altogether?”

“\$13,977.27.”

“Fourteen thousand plus ammo at five bucks a round?!?”

“Plus ammo. I didn’t buy any.”

“Why not?”

“I thought I’d wait until the entire package was assembled and then buy ten boxes.”

“How many boxes in a case?”

“Twenty.”

“One thousand for a case of 200 rounds?”

“Actually one thousand twenty per case plus shipping and sometimes tax.”

“Humph. And you don’t belong to any fifty caliber shooting clubs?”

“Afraid not.”

“I’m not going to make you sleep on the couch, but I have a headache.”

“When did you get that?”

“Very recently.”

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Lynn’s shoulder began to thaw when she found ‘the horse’. I’d never heard of the breed, Tennessee Walking horses. She did spend about \$14,000 as she implied she would. On the other hand that covered the cost of two horses, age five, with show tack for her stallion and new working tack for my gelding. She emulated my rifle purchase and got most of the accessories like halters, saddlebags, pommel bags, lariats and scabbards. Mine was plain leather and hers, hand tooled. I think she felt she evened the score; she had the twinkle back in her eye.

Meanwhile, I was accumulating Hornady ammo for both of my sniper rifles, the Super Match and the Tac-50 at the rate of 100 rounds of each at a time. The Tac-50 should perform flawlessly on the 750gr A-MAX Match. After trying a box of their 178gr A-MAX Match, I tried the 168gr A-MAX Match and both were good choices. I’d use 178gr in the Super Match and 168gr in her Loaded. For Christmas, I received 200 rounds of the .50 caliber ammo and 500 rounds of each bullet weight of 7.62x51mm. In the same vein, birthdays got me five 20 round CMI magazines for the Super Match and one extra magazine for the Tac-50, which remained unfired. Unknown to me, she bought 100 of the CMI magazines, 50 each, of the 20 round and 25 round.

I had the shelter tarred and buried and most of the interior work completed by the time I began to receive two Tac-50 magazines and no CMI magazines. We had the septic tank pumped and I had the well driller check out the well. The well driller said we’d be better off drilling a new well with at least a three inch pipe. It seemed that Bridgeport was an unincorporated community explaining the well and septic system.

Rather than buying from Utah Shelter Systems, we acquired the equipment from American Safe Rooms, saving a bunch of money. Using the pictures on the USS website, we slowly assembled the interior of the shelter. It took several trips to a lumberyard and Lowe’s. The kitchenette was mail order, an Acme ROE9Y78 54" with Stainless Steel Countertop, 4 Electric Burners, Oven, Sink and 24" 12 ft³ upright Refrigerator. We added a small chest freezer, 12 ft³ and an inexpensive microwave.

I copied the bed design from the USS website and put in two single bunks and two double bunks for a sleeping capacity of six. Drawers beneath each bunk provided limited storage. The bathroom was our first major departure from USS. We put in a shower, sink and stool, connecting the drains to the under floor black water tank which

was pumped to the septic system. The water came directly from the new 6" well into a small pressure tank. Yeah, I know, but he said 3" minimum and 6" was just more expensive pipe and accessories. Two small electric, on demand, water heaters provided hot water.

At this point, the escape tunnel was installed and all but the main entrance was covered over. After some discussion and debate, we went with a Cummins 12.5kw Quiet Diesel RV generator. We brought in a man to pour a slab from the basement wall down to the flat slab in front of the shelter and past to the far side of the shelter where he erected a block room to hold the generator. I added a pairs of pipes, both exhaust. One was for the generator engine and the second an exhaust to cool the room. The exhaust went through a positive air pressure valve and blast valve to the surface just as it did in the main shelter. It was the ideal setup and it took both sources of air from the shelter.

"How close are we to being done?"

"We're getting there. We need to get that blast door installed in the basement wall and sit down and consider anything you or I might have missed. I would like a spare set of filters for the safe cell plus extra pre-filter sets."

"What else?"

"Did you select an extensive first aid kit?"

"It's on order. What did you decide we need for a fuel tank?"

"The specs say the generator uses 0.11gph at no load, 0.75gph at half load and 1½gph at full load. There are 365.25 days in the 'average' year or 8,766 hours. At full load, we'd burn up 11,688 gallons. I doubt we'd use that much and a better figure might be 6,575 gallons. Given a choice, I'd try to find a used double wall fiberglass service station tank, of at least 12,000 gallons. We could add 1,000 gallons once a quarter until it's filled. We could stabilize it with PRI-D, like we stabilize our farm gas tank with PRI-G."

"How much for the tank?"

"Used? Maybe as low as six thousand."

"Fair enough, David. I'll keep working and get two more units from Walton Feed. I want laundry twins in the shelter and I'll buy them. You've had that fancy rifle for over a year. When are you going to sight it in?"

"After we get the door installed. We'll need two drums of oil for the generator and spare filters and ignition parts. I can get the glow plugs separately or in a kit. Those batteries underneath the floor can run everything for about 8 hours so I'll have plenty of time to change the oil in the generator. I'll get one set of steel shelving to hold the parts."

“What would you think about putting a 25ft³ freezer in the basement?”

“If you want one, go for it.”

“What would you think about building a barn?”

“It would be cheaper to continue to board the horses. What did you have in mind?”

“Something simple with stalls on either side of the main aisle and storage overhead. We could enclose one stall and use it as a tack room.”

“If that’s what you want, I won’t oppose you. Since ninety percent of the shelter costs came out my pocket, a fair share of the cost of the barn should come out of yours. I’m going to start banking my income over and above our electric, phone, garbage and cable bill. If I can find any gold or silver at a halfway decent price, we should buy some. But, with gold over \$1,500 and silver around \$35 it won’t be anytime soon. I’ll continue to keep the farm tank filled, find a used diesel tank and contribute to the cost of the diesel fuel. Anything else?”

“No. Don’t forget that my biological clock is ticking.”

Her comment was as subtle as a sledge hammer. I thought back and realized Lynn hadn’t contributed anything to the cost of the shelter or most of the equipment. I paid AMEX out of my income and most of the armory had been on my nickel. She paid for every bite of food we stored and ate. Still...

“I have a question if you’ll answer truthfully.”

“It depends on the question David.”

“Just how much money have you squirreled away since we’ve been married?”

“That’s all you wanted to know? About ½ to ⅔ of my take home pay times five years.”

“So you could have bought the horses anytime and didn’t need an excuse?”

“Right. I paid cash.”

“And the barn?”

“After I gave you a hard time about your Tac-50, my conscience started to nag me. So I decided to follow rules one and two. I read some of his stories, too.”

“Remind me.”

“Rule one... never lie; and rule two... never volunteer.”

Arizona Black – Chapter 2

“I remember rule one but not rule two.”

“He changed rule two as it suited his purposes. So did I.”

“So, you can pay cash for the barn?”

“Gee, I hope so, they start construction next Monday. One of the guys will be by Saturday to help you install the door. I told them that we had our backup generator buried underground to eliminate noise problems.”

“Not bad. Not bad at all.”

“What?”

“Maybe we should call you Artful Dodger.”

“Where do I know that from?”

“Oliver Twist.”

“Oh, right. Just find a tank, would you?”

After some thought, it occurred to me that if anyone would know of tank removals, it would be the fuel distributors. There weren't that many and after tracking down three majors distributors, I got on the phone. I called, identified myself and inquired if they were aware of anyone who was replacing or removing their fuel tanks. I hit pay dirt on my second call. A station in Chandler was replacing its smaller tanks with larger tanks. I asked how old the tanks were and was told that they were only four years old. There were three 15,000 gallon tanks being replaced by 3 40,000 gallon tanks. The only difference in the tanks, he said, was the length, 29' 2½" compared to 71' 4". He even gave me a number to call.

“Hi, my name is David Johnstone and I calling about the old 15,000 gallon tanks. Oh, I called the Chevron Distributor. I'm just looking for one. You don't say, what did they go for? Yes, I guess I could go \$7,500. That soon? Do you have the number of the person who transported the first two? Let me write this down. Got it, I'll give him a call. What are the terms? Yes, I know what cash on the barrelhead means. I'll send the check by FedEx and you can take it to a branch of my bank and cash it. Wells Fargo. Oh you do? Yes that does make it convenient.”

“Fred Thompson? My name is David Johnstone and I bought the third tank from the station in Chandler. Could you pick it up and deliver it? Bridgeport, near Cottonwood.

Right on Highway 89. Yes, I imagine I can get a crane from Cottonwood. Eleven Monday morning? Ok, I'll get the excavation put in and arrange the crane. If you'll tell me the charge, I'll have cash. Thanks."

I was getting in over my head and possibly my pocketbook. I called Containment Solutions customer service and explained.

"Hi, I'm David Johnstone and I just bought a slightly used doubled walled tank you manufactured about four years ago. You probably know where I got them because they bought three of your 40,000 gallon tanks. Yes, the Chandler station. I need installation instructions if I can get them. Yes I'll hold... I'm sorry, who? Tank Technical Support? Yes, I can repeat what I said. I'm David Johnstone and I just bought a slightly used doubled walled tank you manufactured about four years ago. You probably know where I got them because they bought three of your 40,000 gallon tanks. Yes, the Chandler station. I need installation instructions if I can get them. Publication INST 6001? Can you send one?"

"I don't know I've never actually seen the tank. It will be delivered at 11am on Monday morning. I have to get the excavation in and hire a crane to lift the tank off the delivery trailer and set into the hole. What are the recommended dimensions of the hole? Thirty four foot long, seventeen feet deep and eighteen feet wide, correct? Oh, eighteen feet wide at the base with a 60° slope outward. Right, a cave-in wouldn't be good. Do you install tanks? Yes, I can call back and find out who the contractor is that is installing the new tanks. Thank you, I'll watch the mail. My email? davidjohns at msn dot com. Thank you. Goodbye."

"What was that all about? You were on the phone forever."

"I called the Chevron distributor and found empty 15,000 gallon tanks in Chandler. I called and bought the last one for \$7,500. Then I called and arranged transport. The tank will be here Monday at 11am. I think I'll call in and either take a sick day or vacation. I called the tank manufacturer and they're sending installation instructions but said to hire a contractor to install the tank. I have to call up to Cottonwood and get the excavator we used for the shelter to open the hole before the tank is delivered. Containment Solutions is sending me an e-mail with additional instructions."

"Is chili ok for supper? I hope so; I started a batch in the crockpot. I'm going riding and will be back between three and four."

And she was gone. I made the remaining calls and nearly had to beg to have the excavation done by 11am on Monday morning. I checked my emails and I had one from Containment Solutions. "The attached file contains INST6001 in pdf format. This was the quick and easy solution to your request." Right, a 3.8Mb file. I checked our supply of paper and ink, opened the file and started printing.

I saw Lynn pulling in and checked my watch, 4:35pm.

“Did you get everything arranged?”

“God, I hope so. You’re a little late.”

“We got to talking. Their wrangler really likes our horses and wanted to know where I got them.”

Un-huh. A two minute conversation took an hour. I couldn’t say anything because I needed a big favor.

“This tank thing is starting to get away from me. I mailed a check for the tank and almost have enough to pay for the delivery but am short the cost of the excavation and the installation. Since you have a goodly sum put up, could you help me here? I’ll pay you back as fast as possible and not spend any money on anything else until you have your money back.”

“Promise?”

“I just said it, didn’t I?”

“Ok, just this once.”

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I know what you’re thinking; me too. Better to find out before there are kids in the mix. We’re still young, only 29. Remember the phone call to Arrow Tech? She knew exactly who she was speaking to. Talented woman, my wife, knows when to play dumb. Probably used her sexy voice and got a discount. The only preps she bought were the food items, but she had enough money to pay cash for two horses and tack plus a new barn. We’ll be done prepping in a year, on the major items, and her biological clock is running, right? The garden? It yielded ~two hundred pounds of potatoes, 18 or 19 tomatoes and 16 green peppers.

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“Thank you, you’ve paid me back in full. I’m going to buy two more horses, mares. Is there anything left undone?”

“Starting a family.”

“I’m only thirty and thought I’d work two more years to put back money for our children.”

“Want to go riding this afternoon?”

“Actually, I’d like to go get that Tac-50 of yours sighted in before it dies of old age.”

“Sure, let’s go shooting.”

“Do you have enough ammo?”

“About half the barrel life (4,000 rounds est. barrel life, depending).”

“What’s that mounted in front of your scope?”

“That is an AN/PVS-27 Magnum Universal Night Sight. It doesn’t magnify; however, it allows the shooter to detect a vehicle in starlight up to 3,150 meters and in quarter moonlight up to 4,070 meters. A man sized target is detectable in starlight up to 1,350 meters and in quarter moonlight up to 1,730 meters.”

“I won’t ask.”

“Good, I won’t tell. Buy the two mares.”

“That much, huh?”

“I got a discount.” (He paid \$5,000, MSRP ~\$10,700. At least he has something to put on the McCann night vision rail. The advantage to this system is that the riflescope remains attached. If you look up the MUNS on the web, it’s shown mounted on a Tac-50.)

“Private purchase. No sales tax, right?”

“Right.”

“Hot?”

“Smokin’.”

They started with their .22LRs and worked up to the Tac-50, sighting in or verifying previous settings on each rifle. Finally, they turned to the Tac-50 and it was dead on with 5 rounds. Lynn fired the other five rounds in the box and they called it a day.

“Why did you run the risk of buying a stolen night scope?”

“I looked at the alternatives and there were several lesser priced night vision scopes like the MUNS available. However I heard about the MUNS and checked it out. It was completely out of reach and I almost bought one of the lesser priced night vision scopes. A guy at work mentioned he had a MUNS and really needed some money. I asked how much and he said \$7,500. I offered \$2,500. He said, ‘Aw man, \$5,000.’ I said ok before he could change his mind. Anyway, when the Russia or China or Mexico or Canada invades, we’re set.”

“That rifle is a winner, but it should be with a combined retail of more than \$20,000. The rifle was \$13,977.27, ammo ~\$7,875 and night vision \$5,000. That’s, oh my God, that’s ~ 27 grand.”

“Too true and you didn’t add the extra 8 magazines you’re getting me for Christmas presents. Figure 30 grand total.” (8*\$390=\$3,120*1.093=3,410.16)

“Where did he get it?”

“He didn’t say, but I suspect he bought it for the same five grand from someone at Camp Navajo.”

“Is the armory complete?”

“Except for ammo, yes.”

“Do you think my loaded would do better with that A-MAX Match ammo you shoot?”

“Without a doubt. The DAG isn’t match grade but it does fine in your rifle. I bought the 168gr Hornady A-MAX Match for your rifle. The only way to improve your rifle is upgrade the scope. I noticed it drifts a little and it’s not you. Your rifle has the same barrel as their National Match. The iron sights on the National Match are finer, but you use a scope.”

“That’s confusing. Do I get a better scope or not?”

“Yes.”

“Yes to which?”

“We’ll get you a Leupold model 54560 Mark 4 4.5-14x50mm LR/T M1 Long Range Tactical Rifle Scope, Finish & Reticle: Matte Black Finish, Mil Dot Reticle.”

“And the Hornady A-MAX?”

“We have slightly more than 5,000 rounds of the 168gr 7.62x51mm. I’m still increasing my supply of 178gr A-MAX. We’ll increase both to 7,500 rounds to include practice ammo. Since I have about 1,500 rounds of the .50 caliber ammo, I’ll work on increasing it to 2,000 plus rounds, including practice ammo. If I can find it, I want some Mk 211 MP.”

“Raufoss?”

“You’ve heard of it?”

"I told you I read some of his stories. He writes about that round like it's the best thing since Granny Smith apples."

"I think maybe it is. It's HEIAP. While intended as an anti-matériel round, it's approved for use as anti-personnel round. It's title two and every round requires a \$200 tax stamp because it's a destructive device. That's on top of the \$7.50 per round. Lynn, if I can find a source, it won't have any tax stamps, period. I'm only willing to pay \$5 a round for it, anyway."

"How much do you want?"

"Fifteen to seventeen cans. It's packed 120 rounds to a can."

"Eighteen hundred to slightly over two thousand rounds? At \$5 a round? You have expensive tastes."

"And you don't?"

"I am spoiled, aren't I?"

"Some. Me too. If you want the best, you have to pay for the best."

"Well, I did get Tennessee Walking horses and a show saddle for myself. Anyway, you want a little over 4,000 rounds of .50 caliber ammo and an additional 5,000 plus rounds of 7.62x51mm I'd better work another year."

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It took over six months to acquire cans of Mk 211. During that period, they filled in the remaining A-MAX in both calibers. David checked the Hornady website and due to the demand before and after the 2008 election they no longer made factory sales. Instead they listed dealers who sold their ammo.

Cheaper than Dirt had the best price on the 750gr A-MAX Match although they generally had the highest prices on ammo; he ordered the 168gr and 178gr at the same time, just to get it out of the way. Next, he went to Ammoman and ordered 4,200 rounds (10 cases) of 62gr M855A1 on stripper clips and 1,000 rounds of 64gr M856 tracer packed 20 per box, 50 boxes to the case. To this, he added 2,000 rounds of 230gr Gold Dot and the same of Cleanfire Lawman plus 2,000 rounds each of Lawman 124gr FMJ and Gold Dot 124gr +P.

Finally, they got masks, suits, boots, gloves and tape from Approved Gas Masks in San Diego plus a case of the spare CBRN filters. David also bought 8 booklets of M-8 gas detector papers which came 25 per booklet. Two each baby Safe Pros and Child Safe Pros and more filters for those units were added as were a pair of voice amplifiers, protective lenses and gas mask bags.

They were so close to completion they could taste it. Lynn ordered one gross of cases (1,728 count) each of pints and quarts from Canning Pantry along with enough of the cases of extra regular mouth lids for two additional seasons. She added a flaker and a powered Country Living Mill with spare parts and accessories. Two All American 30 quart pressure canners took the place of a single 41.5 quart unit.

“Done?”

“So it would seem. Now we just rotate food supplies. I went ahead and ordered 4 deluxe units from Walton because they keep raising their prices. Considering the amount of hot chocolate we drink, I added a fifty pound bag. The two years you wanted to work are up. Are you finally ready to start our family?”

“We’ll start and I’ll work up to my eight month. We’ll save all we can until that happens.”

It took 10 months for the quarterly birth control injection to completely wear off and for Lynn to resume her cycle. Lynn used Depo-Provera and was experiencing a delayed return of fertility. The average return to fertility is 9 to 10 months after the last injection. By 18 months after the last injection, fertility is the same as that in former users of other contraceptive methods. It took an additional 5 months before she missed a period. The doctor confirmed she was pregnant and David and she were delighted. They made reservations and drove down to Prescott for dinner and dancing. Not really being drinkers, Lynn had a Brandy Alexander and David an Old Fashioned. This would be their last drink for some time; liquor wasn’t kept in their home.

That was about to change because David had finally finished the basement. It was divided in half, lengthwise. One side was finished and would contain a fireplace with a gas log, wet bar, TV and two conversation-pits using sectional sofas, one based on the fireplace and the other on the TV. The finished side was finished with ¾” drywall topped with ¼” paneling. It included a ½ bath aka powder room. There was a 36” wide steel clad solid core door to the unfinished side.

The unfinished side was pure storage. It contained 288 boxes of new Mason jars, and the shelving and can racks holding the extra double bought and sale food... their backup supply of what they regularly ate. It also contained the 25ft³ chest freezer which was kept full and the food rotated. All of their firearms, excluding the ‘cowboy’ guns were stored in the shelter. The ‘cowboy’ guns were kept in their front hall closet, loaded.

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“Since I’m pregnant, I’ve been thinking about those guns in the hall closet. We need to change our practice. We either keep the guns unloaded or locked up. It will be some time, but children are curious creatures. Any ideas?”

“Lynn, if it’s ok with you, we can put in a locking gun cases to hold the two rifles and three revolvers.”

“It’s fine with me. We’ll go to Cottonwood tomorrow and find something.”

“This soon?”

“It’s a good idea and we’ll need to get in the habit.”

Lynn had saved nearly every penny during the fifteen months between the decision to start a family and her getting pregnant. When the doctor confirmed the pregnancy, she had sixteen months put up along with her previous savings. David hadn’t saved as much, but the tanks were topped off and the basement finished. They went together to select liquor for the wet bar. They decided to buy a full case of good brandy and another of Jack Daniels Single barrel. Other liquors and wines were selected to permit them to mix an assortment of cocktails and they generally purchased in quantities of threes. Examples included sweet and dry vermouth, triple sec, etc. David also bought bar utensils and glassware. They also added a selection of liqueurs. They dropped a bundle on the booze and considering the fact that they didn’t entertain, it seemed superfluous.

The doctor had mentioned the Lamaze method in response to one of Lynn’s questions. It was still practiced to an extent, but was more of an information program than a preferred birth method. Lynn read up on it, located a group and enrolled them. Initially, David was put off by her running his life as much as she seemed to. He thought it over and decided it would make her happy and was essentially harmless, so far as he was concerned.

It was a small class was held in a residence in Cottonwood with an out of town instructor down from Flagstaff. David and Lynn made several friends in the class and for the first time since they married, began to entertain and accept invitations to dinner parties and get-togethers. After a run of nearly ten years, their life began to take on a sense of normalcy. The term is attributed to Warren G. Harding’s campaign for president where he used the slogan, "A return to normalcy" and is the same as normality, routine, regularity or status quo. Harding was referring to the pre-World War One Years. At the time, the War had many names which didn’t include World War One.

Having made several new friends and learned a bit about them, David realized he had made an omission setting up the wet bar. He promptly added a two keg beer dispenser, with CO₂ and a keg of Coors and keg of Miller Genuine Draft. He added schooners (~14oz) to his glassware. It was strictly a guy thing; the instructor emphasized no drinking during pregnancy. The seller warned him that the beer had a shelf life of ~ 4 months and recommended that David buy ½ kegs rather than full kegs. A full keg is ½ of a barrel so the ½ kegs were ¼ barrel.

The locking gun cabinets were small and the revolver case held 4 revolvers and the rifle case 6 rifles. They had glass fronts and a built in locks, which used the same key. They

got their own spot in the living room and served to generate some conversation. It ranged from, 'I'd love to have those' to 'guns kill people.' David didn't try to explain that the projectile killed people and the projectile stayed in the firearm until someone pulled the trigger. The old 1873 Colts didn't have a safety and could discharge without a pull of the trigger, in certain instances. The firearms were still loaded and the revolvers held SIX cartridges. (Theirs had transfer bar safeties and were produced in the late nineties.) The leather came from Fitzpatrick down in Laredo. His set had the crossdraw setup and she had a single holster for her 5½" revolver. Both were the Laredoan, plain black without Conchos.

"Would it be difficult to install carpet on the finished side of the basement?"

"I wouldn't think so. Installing carpet is beyond my skill set. Hire it installed when you buy it."

"What would you suggest we install?"

"Indoor-Outdoor."

"I'll check it out."

"They recommended Berber loop carpet with marine backing as best for indoor installation, especially in basements and other areas prone to moisture. They'll install it next week."

"Expensive?"

"I don't really know. I have nothing to compare it to. I got it at Lowe's. They charge for installation by the yard. Is everything in the finished side moveable?"

"Yes, everything."

"That's what I thought. It will make the installation quick and easy."

"Do you want me to move everything to the unfinished side?"

"Could you?"

"I'll do it over the weekend."

"Can you move it back after they finish?"

"Sure. It will take a couple of nights, though."

Moving everything to the unfinished side would be a real chore. I decided to turn off the gas and move the fireplace first. I'd follow that with the bar and then the TV. Finally, I'd

moved the furniture, giving them a bare floor. The enclosed stairwell went from between the kitchen and dining room to the finished side of the basement and the space under the stair was open. The ½ bath was built in the unfinished side with a door opening to the finished side. They wouldn't need to do much piecing.

I haven't mentioned propane. Our furnace, hot water heater, dryer and kitchen stove were propane. We had a 1,100 gallon tank with the standard 90% desert fill. We generally got by with a single fill annually during the fall. Our fireplace also ran off the same tank, increasing our usage and required a spring and fall fill. The gas grill used the 20 pound bottles and I had three, two of which were always full (4.5 gallons).

"Guess what?"

"You're pregnant with twins?"

"How did you know?"

"I didn't. You just confirmed it. Lynn, you went to the doctor today and you're smiling. What else could it be?"

"Triplets?"

"Really?"

"No, it's twins. He thought he might be hearing two heartbeats and ran an ultrasound to be sure. We have one of each on the way."

"Which one is mine?"

"They're both yours. I knew it! That day I went riding and got home late, you suspected I'd been fooling around with that wrangler. And, when I decided to wait two more years, I could see in your eyes that you weren't happy about it."

"All true I'm afraid."

"Think about this. When did I ask about putting in our own barn?"

"Before you went riding."

"Right. Why do you think I wanted our own barn?"

"I don't know, why?"

"The guy was hitting on me. The reason I was late that day was just what I said, he asked me where I got the Tennessee Walking Horses. That took all of two minutes tops. And then, he made a suggestion and I slapped him hard, let me tell you. I spent an hour

with the owner explaining what had been happening and why I was moving our horses. When I went to get the horses, the wrangler was gone.”

Arizona Black – Chapter 3

That explained a lot. I wondered why I was just learning this now, but Lynn was a woman who knew her own mind and generally took care of her own problems. Despite the change in Arizona law eliminating the requirement for CCWs, we had them anyway because they predated the law change. We intended to renew, too.

The doctor suggested that Lynn do some walking to ‘get her exercise’. I didn’t want her out late in the evening alone so I went along. The exercise was good for both of us. We were about ½ mile from home when suddenly I felt a stabbing pain in my right calf.

“Get back, it’s an Arizona Black. Call 911.”

“I didn’t bring my phone.”

“Dammit, neither did I. Can you walk back and get one of our vehicles?”

She took off at a rather fast pace for a walk. The rattler had slithered off somewhere known only to it and God. Although the use of tourniquets has been disabused, I pulled my belt and made one as best as I could. I was relatively certain that Verde Valley Medical Center in Cottonwood stocked CroFab. I was wearing oxfords rather than my cowboy boots, dumb, dumb, dumb. My leg was developing edema (swelling) and I removed my shoe. It started to get hazy and just about then, Lynn pulled in followed by an ambulance. They didn’t run any stop lights, but they got me to the Medical Center damned fast.

“Mr. Johnstone, which species bit you?”

“Arizona Black.”

“Are you positive?”

“Yes, we’ve seen them before.”

“Reconstitute all six units of CroFab and call Flagstaff for an additional twelve units. Tell them we could need them as soon as 60 minutes.”

Flagstaff was only 40 miles line of sight but it was almost 70 miles by road. I drifted off and didn’t hear the doctor direct that the CroFab be flown in. Lynn later told me that she was really shaken but managed to get all of our insurance information to the hospital administration. CroFab is a very expensive drug costing from \$2,500 a vial. It’s even more expensive if it is delivered by helicopter.

I was in the hospital eight days and the bill was six figures. When the insurance companies balked, Lynn persuaded the law firm where she worked to get involved. She told me that it took two phone calls, one to each insurance company and the bill was paid in full. Apparently, she said, neither company wanted to cover the anti-venom or the flight from Flagstaff. My right leg was a mess. The open sore was huge and required a graft of artificial skin. It still left scarring.

Looking over my journal, I see that I left out a few things. I don't know that they're important now, during the lead up to the 2012 elections. Obama rode the swell of public approval he got for ordering the SEALs to take out bin Laden, into a second term. The Republicans were giving him fits during mid-2011 and he backed down about ½ step. The biggest problem he had besides that was the Mississippi River Flood of 2011, which was worse than the 1993 flood.

He minded his Ps and Qs and got reelected in the fall of 2012. That election was far closer than the 2008 contest. One by one, the Republican potential candidates pulled their names from the pool. I'm not sure of the order, but Mike Huckabee, AR and Donald Trump, NY, pulled out shortly after bin Laden died. I didn't vote because I hadn't been released from the Medical Center. That gets everything in perspective. What I don't understand was that I was bitten on October 31, 2012. What was an Arizona Black doing out that late in the year?

It had been a warmer than usual year and fall came late. Maybe the snake was trying catch one last rodent and along came Lynn and David. We must have surprised the snake because I never heard it rattle. Note to self: don't walk around in the boonies without the boots and a firearm, even if there aren't any rattlesnakes out and about.

My leg finally healed but the scars weren't going anywhere. The snake must have nearly emptied its venom sacs; they used 18 bottles of CroFab 6+6+4+2, and had six more bottles on standby. The envenomation site developed cellular necrosis which they debrided. I did learn one thing, CroFab is freeze dried, comes 2 vials to the box and has to be reconstituted with 10 ml of sterile water and then mixed with 250 ml of saline. The rate of infusion of one dose, 250ml, is 60 minutes, IV, and they administered 6 doses per hour. Most of the stay was due to the necrosis.

We had more on our plate to be concerned about. Lynn was about the size of a barn, really. I swear she looked like she could explode at any minute. She was forced to begin her maternity leave at seven months rather than eight. And, although we agreed she wouldn't return to work, she could only keep her insurance if she took the leave. We had names picked out, Paul David and Jordan Anne. She picked Paul David and I picked Jordan Anne, remembering an actress from Law and Order who later had her own series. I picked Anne because it fit with Jordan.

Right around eight months, the doctor informed us that Lynn had to have a C section or risk a ruptured uterus. So, our babies came early. They were small, five pounds ± 2

ounces with Jordan being the larger. They kept them three days and agreed to release Lynn and the babies when Alice, Lynn's mother, showed up from Seattle. Her father would be down in a 'couple of weeks'. We needed some minor medical equipment and Alice wrote a check. I'd met her parents trice. Once when I'd been introduced and again when I discussed marrying Lynn with her father, Paul. He was surprised I'd bothered to ask and gave his blessing. The third time was the wedding. He got stuck for the wedding and reception, but we were frugal and ended up with a check large enough for a two week honeymoon.

We didn't take the honeymoon and split the money 50-50. The check paid for a substantial down payment on the house in Bridgeport when combined with our savings. The house sat on ½ acre. We had the home paid for about the time the shelter was finished. The following week, my mother showed up after I called and told her we had twins. My mother, June, had only met Alice at the wedding. They stayed 4 weeks, and I was almost crazy before they left.

Paul seemed to be into guns and he and I went to Flagstaff and bought the kids new 9422s and new Bearcats. He indicated an interest in upgrading the firearms as the children grew up. He also asked what I knew about generation skipping estate tax. I'd heard of it, but knew little about. He went on to say that it had been repealed and he had to come up with something else. I mentioned putting a portion of his estate in American Eagles and storing the coins in our safe. So long as he paid cash, it seemed likely that the coins might go unnoticed.

"Not bad, not bad at all."

Paul and Alice began to visit about once a month and every visit he'd give me a few cloth bags and said, "Put it in your safe storage."

I didn't look. Based on the weight of the bags, it was gold or silver. After a few months of this, I had to ask. "This is your Plan B, right?"

"Sort of. If something happens and we need it, we'll try to get here. Otherwise, it belongs to whoever has it, you, Lynn and the grandchildren. I have half a notion to buy a Suburban and get it all tricked out, like Rufus, and use it to haul larger loads down here until it's all transferred."

"How much do you have?"

"It would take several trips if we bought a little at a time."

"You're that rich?"

"Not always. Timing affects how an investment in precious metals can sometimes turn out. Lynn's grandparents, all four, died in the span of about a year. So, Alice and I suddenly had a lot of money to invest. We worked with a gold dealer and given the

volume we wanted to purchase, he agreed to less than a full markup. Kitco does it depending upon how much you buy. Between large estates and depressed gold prices and a willing dealer, we did very well. We bought equal weights of gold and silver. The US Mint has established the ratio between gold and silver at 50:1 based on the face value of the one ounce coins. However, it varies from the mid-seventies to the mid-thirties.

“When we bought, the ratio was in the mid-thirties and silver was inflated or gold was depressed. It’s worth about eight to ten times our investment. You could count it, but it will total 7 figures.”

“Right, \$1 million to \$9,999,999.99.”

“About halfway. You really need something better than the storage cabinet to hold it.”

I did some work with my calculator later. If it had been all gold at \$5 million, it would have weighed 3,333 troy ounces. If it had been all silver, assuming the 50:1 ratio, it would have weighed 166,666 troy ounces. However, Paul said equal quantities. $X * 1,500 + X * 30 = 5,000,000$. $1,530X = 5,000,000$. $X = 3,268$ troy ounces of each. Check: $3,268 * 1,500 + 3,268 * 30 = 4,902,000 + 98,040 = 5,000,040$. Rounding error, close enough. $3,268 * 2 = 6,536$ troy ounces, 450 pounds.

“Paul, I did some calculations based on what you said your holdings were. I came up with about 3,268 troy ounces of each metal.”

“I rounded a little, David. We actually have 3,500 ounces of each.”

$1,500 * 3,500 + 30 * 3,500 = 5,250,000 + 105,000 = 5,355,000$...that was some rounding error! 7,000 troy ounces weighed 480 pounds. One trip would haul all they had.

“You realize that you could haul all you have in a single trip?”

“Only if I had a backup. You interested?”

“Let’s say I’m willing if you so choose.”

“Let me get a Suburban fixed up and I’ll send you a plane ticket. Alice can fly down and you can fly up. I’ll provide the weapons. We’ll leave the Suburban here. It will take a while to swap out the engine and other electronics. Rufus wasn’t built in a day, you know.”

Rufus wasn’t built in a month, either; nor a quarter. From then on only Alice and my mom visited, at different times. Seven months later, Paul called and said the ticket was in the mail and gave me the dates. I arranged enough vacation times two, just in case, and flew to Seattle on the appointed day. Paul picked me up and we drove to their house, presumably to load the metals.

“This is just a quick stop to get you armed. The gold and silver are already loaded. I have an H&K USP Tactical with an AAC Ti-Rant suppressor for you plus a USP Compact for backup. The shotgun is the same as you have. The rifle is a loaded model with the same Leupold scope Lynn has and M118LR ammo; shoots about ¾ MOA. Take a bathroom break and let’s hit the road.”

I had looked up the trip a while back on MSN Maps. The distance was ~1,410 miles and cut catty corner to I-15 north of Salt Lake City. It departed I-15 around Nephi and took local roads down to where 29 became 89. From there, 89 went all the way to Camp Verde and we were just a few miles from home. I assumed we stop about halfway down. Rule three: Never Assume. Slightly under 24 hours later, we were pulling into our place. Paul only stopped at service stations to use the facilities, he had ample fuel. I asked and he said 90 plus 98 for a total of 188 gallons times 15 equaled 2,820 miles.

We unloaded the gold and silver and placed all of it under the shelter floor in a very dark area. We covered it with an old blanket and tossed some miscellaneous junk on top. Out sight and out of mind.

In 2016, the Republican candidate was a shoo-in after 8 years of Osama Obama. I think that even the ex-Alaskan Governor could have gotten elected. The American population had had enough. Obama’s second term reminded me of Bush’s second term, a constant fight with Congress. There is something very wrong in Washington.

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We gained a few nuclear powers over the years. North Korea tested a real nuke and it went ~100kT. Iran’s went more like 250kT. Hugo claimed he had the bomb but hadn’t tested any that we knew of. An Israeli scientist angry over who knows what came forward and backed up Mordechai Vanunu, the guy who blew the whistle on Israel in 1986. So much for nuclear ambiguity. The old guys from the late forties through the late sixties were all dead and buried and the Israeli Prime Minister announced publically that they had 435 weapons deployed on their Jericho 2 and 3 missiles, some Delilah cruise missiles, and bombs that their fighters could deliver. The Delilah lacked the range of the TLAM-N, but reportedly, not the power. The stated range of the submarine launched version was 1,250km (780 miles).

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“I didn’t bring it all. I held back \$355,000 in mixed gold and silver. But you’ll have ~\$5 million under the floor of your shelter. Lynn, David and you should remember that as long as either Alice or I are alive, it’s ours. After that, we won’t care.”

Blunt, clear and concise. I might have worded it differently. Lynn served up Denver omelets, hash browns and toast with orange juice and coffee. Although exhausted, I was too worked up to go to sleep, so I mucked the stalls.

Paul was smoking a cigar, probably to cover the smell and he asked, "What happened to your father? Are your parents divorced?"

"No, my father died the year before I met Lynn. Heart attack. He simply dropped dead where he stood. They did an autopsy and said nothing would have saved him."

"So there's a history of heart disease in your family?"

"No, his heart wasn't diseased, it just quit. The medical examiner speculated ventricular fibrillation. It took about 8 or 9 minutes for help to arrive and by then, he was brain dead."

"I'm sorry, I didn't know."

"I don't talk about it much. My mother has a really bad attitude about his death. She blames it on his drinking. My father wasn't a boozer. He was the type of guy who would keep a six pack in the refrigerator in case a friend visited and only ever drank a single bottle of beer. He kept a pint of Old Grand Dad Whiskey for some of his other friends and usually the seal was intact."

"Do you have it in your basement bar?"

"Don't care for Bourbon. I got a case of Jack Daniels Single Barrel and a case of brandy."

"What brand of brandy, Christian Bros.?"

"No, Hennessy XO"

"That's a very good cognac. Probably cost as much as the single barrel."

"Double. I drink the Jack and Lynn drinks the Hennessy."

"What do you have on tap?"

"Coors and Miller Genuine Draft."

"Not bad."

"Not good, we don't drink it up as fast as it goes bad or gets gassy."

"Those weapons you used on the trip down are yours to keep. I'll buy a duplicate set and you'll have weapons for Paul and Jordan. I'm going to shop around and find some Winchester Legacy model 94s in .45 Colt and a pair of the Colt SAA artillery models. I can buy holsters and just use inexpensive cartridge belts until they're fully grown."

“That’s great. Make sure the Colts have transfer bars. They let you load 6 rounds.”

“I think I heard about that. Late 20th and early 21st Century?”

“Yeah. Lynn and I have quite a bit of ammo. We have about 5,000 rounds of DAG surplus and about 5,000 rounds each of 168gr and 178gr A-MAX. The five-five-six is M855A1 and M856. We don’t have much of that, about 5,000 rounds. The .50BMG is a mix of 750gr A-MAX Match and Mk 211. We have about 2,000 rounds of each. Pistol ammo is all Speer, Lawman or Gold Dot including some of their short barrel stuff for our backups.”

“Does that include the .45 Colt?”

“Yes. It’s all Gold Dot. Shotgun ammo is Brenneke 3” Black Magic 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ ounce slug and Remington 3” 15 pellet 00 buckshot. And yes, it packs a punch on both ends.”

“Any other ammo?”

“Twenty-two long rifle. CCI with a mixture of their different loads. Maybe 10,000 rounds.”

“Where did you get the Mk 211?”

“I was in the market for the night scope for my Tac-50. I looked at the MUNS made by Omni Tech Partners Group. The problem was they sold for around \$10,700; that was more than I paid for the basic rifle. A guy at work was trying to unload a MUNS and wanted \$7,500. I offered \$2,500 and we split the difference. That made it cheaper than a Raptor. Later, I wanted some Mk 211 and ask the guy who sold me the MUNS if he could get some. He checked and he said he could, 2 or 3 cans at a time. I wanted 2,000 rounds or seventeen cans. I got 3 per month for 6 months or 18 cans. The cans hold 120 rounds.”

“Over 2,100 rounds?”

“Yeah.”

“Don’t get caught.”

“I’ll do my best. Eventually we got to buying the Hornady .50 cal by the case of 200 rounds. We have more than 2,000 rounds of both types of ammo.”

“Lynn told her mom that she’s not going to return to work.”

“We agreed on that. I have a good job and make more than enough to support my family and set aside about 10-15% of every paycheck, just in case.”

“Just in case?”

“One of those patriot fiction authors says he has a list of 137 possibilities. That being the case, who knows, it could be anything. We have the essentials covered: water, food, shelter, clothing, protection, etc.”

“Et Cetera?”

“Things like seeds, a chainsaw, engine oil and chain oil, spare chains, a hydraulic splitter.”

“But David, you don’t have anything that burns firewood.”

“Right, but I can cut it and barter it for things we need.”

“That Suburban is EMP proof and gets good mileage, considering. If your pickup won’t run, you need a trailer to deliver firewood.”

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After Paul and Alice left, I explained what Paul had told me about that duplicate set of firearms for Jordan. The next day, Lynn called Alice, about something. She told her mother that since we had a second loaded, it would be nice if Paul bought her a Super Match and Jordan got her loaded. The next trip they took to Bridgeport, they drove and had a Super Match for Lynn, with the same scope as on my rifle for her rifle. Paul also had another set of H&K handguns with the same suppressors for the Tactical’s and another 590A1 SPX. Paul had located the 94s in .45 Colt and the new Colt revolvers.

He had obviously paid attention. Another 3,500 rounds of the 168gr A-MAX he had and an assortment of ammo that included another 5,000 plus rounds of five-five-six to feed the what? Damn, I had the five-five six and nothing that used the ammo. He must have caught that too, because he had four NIB Ruger AC-556K with 10 30-round Ruger magazines each. These were equipped with Surefire style FA adapters for the M4-FA. The K model has the folding stock. Even better, the magazines worked.

While I appreciated all he had done, I was beginning to get uneasy. If he kept this up, we’d end up with one barn stall filled with rockets, grenades, mines and explosives.

“You can get whatever additional ammo you will need David. We ordered LTS supplies from Nitro Pak. It appears you have room in your storage room. Now, how about a taste of the Single Barrel?”

“Sure, rocks or neat?”

“Rocks, please.”

I poured him a pretty good measure and tried to draw a schooner of Coors. I got a glass of foam. I rinsed the glass and went for the MGD. It not only foamed but had a somewhat unpleasant odor.

“I guess I’m going to have to settle for an Old Fashioned. Next time I’ll get pony kegs.”

“How long do you think they’re good for?”

“Seems to be about 4 months. These kegs are about 5 months old.”

“How much is in a keg and a pony?”

“The keg is 15.5 gallons and the pony 7.75 gallons. I got Coors as a light beer and Millers Genuine Draft as a full bodied beer. We haven’t entertained much and the choices have been about 50-50.”

“How much do you figure has been consumed?”

“About half of each.”

“Then you’re on the right track. Let’s run over to Cottonwood and replace the kegs with half kegs, my treat. I might want a beer later.”

“Don’t get me wrong Paul, but I can afford two half kegs.”

“Maybe, but it was my idea. How would you feel about Alice and I considering this our home away from home? Seattle is a prime target because of the local industry and naval bases.”

“I wouldn’t mind and Lynn would love the help.”

“How many bedrooms does this old mausoleum have?”

“Five. One on the main floor and four upstairs.”

“So, you could put up yourself, Lynn and the kids in three, Alice and I in one and your mother in the other?”

“Yes, why the interest?”

“I probably follow the news more closely than you do. Something big is brewing. I don’t know what, yet; but, it will be nothing short of mind boggling.”

“How much would you need to move down here?”

“A bunch. All of our preps, firearms, ammo and clothing. I’ll get a moving company to do it when I have a better handle on it. You may wish to talk to June and get her here when I give you the word.”

“That could be interesting. You’ve noticed that since the first time when Lynn and the babies came home from the hospital, she’s never here when Alice and/or you are here?”

“What’s with that?”

“Your guess is as good as mine. Ever since Dad died, she’s been rather withdrawn. Once I suggested she get grief counseling and she threw me out.”

“That sounds a lot like depression. You told me she disapproved of your Dad’s drinking. Did she get in his face about it?”

“Oh yeah.”

“And his cause of death was essentially unsubstantiated?”

“Right again.”

“Sure sounds like she is stuck on stage four. Do you know the five stages of grief? They’re Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance. A person can get stuck at any stage and there’s no guarantee that the steps will always be in that order. You had the right idea but she was probably in Anger or Denial at that time. We can let Alice and Lynn work with her if an opportunity presents itself.”

Paul’s comment about his paying closer attention to the news provoked my curiosity. He must be seeing something I’d missed. After supper, I found a little time to check the various news sites on the web. There wasn’t any one thing that stuck out. Why then did I suddenly feel uneasy? We hadn’t been involved in a war anywhere in ~ 5 years.

“Are you still on vacation or do you have to return to work?”

“Neither, tomorrow is Saturday and it’s not my turn to work.”

“Ok if we drive down to Phoenix?”

“Just you and me or all four of us?”

“You and me.”

“Mind if I ask why?”

“I don’t mind.”

Arizona Black – Chapter 4

“And...”

“I ordered something’s we have to pick up. No major surprises, except for one. I have the missing pistol suppressors and a rifle for Lynn.”

The rifle for Lynn was a mirror image of mine including the Jet suppressor. It was complete with 10 magazines, too. There were also 20 200-round cases of 750gr A-MAX. The only thing missing was the Raufoss.

“I figured you could spit the Mk 211 with Lynn so you’ll each have 1,000 rounds of Mk 211 and 3,000 rounds of Hornady Match. The rifle was less than a Barrett until you add accessories and ammo. I have about the same amount in my Barrett but I have a Raptor 6X instead of the Night Force and MUNS.”

“She’s going to be surprised.”

“So is Alice. I got her a Barrett M82 .416 with BORS and the Night Force scope. I had it modified to accept 10 round custom .416 magazines. I just happen to know an extremely good gunsmith. I ordered a pair of Jet suppressors, one in each caliber. We have every bit of an arsenal as you have. That’s point number one. Point number two is I’m retiring in a few months and we’re seriously thinking about moving down here. We’ll probably build a ranch house with a basement and subbasement. Not many targets in this area.”

“Sounds expensive.”

“Probably will be. How much is a life worth? Besides, we can’t take with us when our times come.”

“So, what’s next?”

“I listed our house and we’ll go home and wait for it to sell. Then, in the words of Bruce Willis, Yippee-ki-yay.” Lynn and I’ll buy four geldings and the tack tomorrow.”

“You ride?”

“Does a duck quack? Since I was 12 years old. Our horses are getting old, though and the Tennessee Walking Horses are a good breed. Our current horses are Morgan’s and almost 20 years old.”

“Why four?”

“Spares? I guess mostly because you have room in your barn.”

The following day, Lynn went with her father and they bought 4 geldings and tack similar to the tack she bought for my horse. Paul comment on the tack indicating that, while plain, it was very good quality. They included saddlebags, pommel bags and lariats. I'd never used my pommel bags, hence didn't realize that they had holsters on each side for 5½" Artillery model SAAs. Moreover, the holsters weren't empty and had 5½" Colts.

“Lynn, you didn't mention that the pommel bags had holsters.”

“I thought you knew David; that was their original purpose. They'll hold the revolver and a 50 round box of cartridges. You can carry more ammo in the saddle bags, if necessary. The four geldings we picked out are five year olds and cost the same amount as your horse. The tack is identical to what I bought you; plain and high quality. Dad and Mom love to ride and the colts we have will belong to Jordan and Paul, eventually. You know they're moving down here don't you?”

“Paul mentioned it. Do you know where they intend to live?”

“Daddy bought the adjoining five acres and left blueprints for the house, shelter and detached garage. They're going to buy a new diesel generator and are debating on what size they want. Knowing them, it will probably be a 30kw or larger. The shelter will be some sort of a subbasement.”

“Sort of?”

“Yes, one foot of reinforced concrete all around covered with 60 inches of soil and another one foot of reinforced concrete for the basement floor. The protection factor is about 140 thousand.”

“What's ours?”

“About 180 thousand. What about the revolvers in the pommel bags?”

“Transfer bar Colts.”

“If you'd told me when we bought this place what we'd be doing today, I'd have put you in an institution. Oh well, I started to read more news sources and began to see what Paul was concerned about. Not only are there the ten confirmed nuclear powers, Brazil and Venezuela along with Germany and Japan seem to be close to joining the club.”

“You left off South Africa.”

“I thought they dropped their program and disposed of the weapons.”

“They did. As I read and even heard you say, ‘that was then and this is now’.”

“So there are 15 members?”

“That we know of. Did you ever see the movie ‘The Manhattan Project’?”

“Remind me.”

“High school kid, sharp as a tack, finds out his teacher is running a lab or something producing enriched uranium or plutonium or something like that. He steals some and builds an atom bomb. Except, he made one little mistake and it started to count down all on its own.”

“John Lithgow?”

“That’s the one. Think about it. All of these foreign students get visas and come over here to get degrees. Some stay on and get Masters and PhDs. Then their visa runs out and they take that expensive education back to their second or third world country and put that education to use doing what they know how to do best, build nukes.”

“But the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty...”

“Is just a piece of paper.”

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“Lynn, Mom. The house sold for our asking price. The escrow will close in 31 days. The buyer was some high roller with Microsoft. You father and I set the price high because of shelter, fuel tanks, well and septic system. Believe it or not, that’s what sold the guy on the place, instant survival retreat. I kind of think he forgot about Puget Sound and Cascadia. What was that song? If the left one don’t get you, the right one will?”

“Muhammad Ali?”

“Oh, that’s right. Have they started on the house and shelter yet?”

“The well and septic are in and the excavation is dug. They installed the tanks beneath the subbasement floor and poured it last month. They poured the walls from the subbasement up to a couple of feet above ground level last week and added the soil. They said they’d pour the basement floor in about ten days. The prefab log home Daddy ordered is sitting there waiting to be assembled. I asked the general contractor how long it would be and he said it would be wrapped up and finished before the end of the month.”

“The movers will pick up our things the day before the sale closes and I’ll fly down and meet the truck when it arrives. Now, how are the kids doing?”

“Trying to give me gray hair.”

“Nonsense, not at your age. Anything else new?”

“Yes, but it’s not good news.”

“What is it?”

“I had a little off cycle spotting and went in to see the OB/GYN that delivered the twins. He did an ultrasound and I have a problem in the myometrium of my uterus. He’s strongly recommending a partial. He mentioned adenomyosis possibly resulting in adenomyoma and said that normally a hysterectomy would be considered an appropriate treatment option for this condition. The cause is unknown. Sometimes adenomyosis may cause a mass or growth within the uterus, which is called an adenomyoma. The disease usually occurs in women older than 30 who have had children. It is more likely in women with previous cesarean section or other uterine surgery. He thinks that there’s more to it and I’m scheduled for an MRI for the day after tomorrow to confirm whether or not a partial is appropriate. I’ll call and let you know what I find out.”

“Did you tell David?”

“Yes last night. He’s upset but reminded me we have a pair of winners and I need to put my health first so I’ll be around to see them grow up.”

“I agree. You call when you know. I do have to run, I have more to do than time to do it.”

When I got home, Lynn had been crying. I asked what was wrong and she told me that she went out on the net and found out more about her condition. If the MRI verified what the doctor told her, she would probably end up having a partial hysterectomy. She was concerned because that meant no more children. I tried my best to reassure her and pointed out, again, that we had a girl and a boy already and I’d never given any thought to more than three children.

I sensed there was more to it, but didn’t press. So many women, it seems, develop cancer in either their reproductive organs or breasts these days. We gathered up the kids and drove up to Cottonwood for supper.

“Mom called.”

“Yes and...?”

“They really jacked up the price on their house because of the shelter, generator and fuel tanks. She said ‘some high roller with Microsoft’ bought the house and the real

selling point was the 'instant survival retreat'. The escrow closes in 31 days and she'll fly down the day it closes to meet the movers."

"Will the log home be done?"

"I asked the general who said about 3½ weeks."

"What about the blueprints?"

"The majority of them detailed the subbasement and basement. There were two sets of the home. The manufacturer will be down to assemble the home according to the general."

"Biff-boom-bam. I'd hate to see your Dad when he has a full head of steam."

"Yeah, he's hell on wheels. I imagine he told you that all of the accumulated gold and silver were a result of my grandparents dying. As far as it goes, that's true. However, he's an Aeronautical Engineer who spent his entire working career working for Boeing. My mother was a legal secretary the same as I was except that she worked for a bigger firm and made a really good salary. About 60 percent of the money they invested came from the estates and the other 40 percent came from their savings. So two out of the five million was from money they earned and invested."

"I had no idea."

"They both liked to ride and we had three Morgan's that they bought when I was about 15. We rode often, went camping whenever it wasn't raining and hunting every fall. By the time these two are old enough, they'll be thoroughly trained outdoors people and accomplished riders, regardless of what happens between now and then."

"My concerns are on the immediate future."

"Que sera, sera." (Stiff upper lip, probably for the sake of Jordan and Paul.)

When we got home, I dropped Lynn and the kids off, got a flashlight and headed over to check Paul and Alice's new construction. It was coming along nicely and the refilled holes holding the fuel tanks were obvious. The only thing that was strange about them was the size. Either Paul had very large tanks installed or the excavator had gotten carried away. Fuel prices were in the \$4-\$5 range depending on whether it was 87, 89 or 92 octane gas or #2 diesel, the highest of all. Propane wasn't cheap but it was the cheapest of the five. I didn't stay long and rushed back home to help get our two ready for bed.

Lynn had bathed Jordan first and was drying her off. I took over and she plopped Paul in the tub. After I got Jordan in her diaper and nightgown, I went back and repeated the

process with Paul, substituting PJs for a nightgown. I read them a story and about page five they were sound asleep.

“Drink to help you relax?”

“I’ll take a snifter.”

“I think I’ll draw a Coors. Sure wouldn’t want any more of it to go bad.”

“Is that why Daddy and you took the two kegs to Cottonwood and came back with two half kegs?”

“I poured him some of the Single Barrel and tried to draw a glass of Coors. It was all bubbles so I rinsed the glass and tried the MGD which was all bubbles and had a bad smell.”

“So what did you drink?”

“An Old Fashioned using Single Barrel.”

“We should keep something less expensive for mixed drinks. Since you don’t like bourbon, maybe Canadian Club.”

“I’ll make a note and try to remember.”

The next time I got to Flagstaff, about ten days later, I stopped by a discount liquor store and bought 3 cases of CC and replacement bottles for the open Single Barrel and open Hennessy XO. I was in Flagstaff to pick up Lynn from the hospital. The MRI led to a biopsy and the pathologist could only say maybe when the subject of a carcinoma came up. The tumor wasn’t well advanced as they sometimes are and they could schedule the surgery rather than perform an emergency partial.

The log home was assembled and they were performing interior work. My mom came to Bridgeport to babysit our twins but neither Paul nor Alice could come down. Mom and I had several long discussions and I persuaded her to see a ‘specialist’. He listened and wrote a prescription. It wasn’t an instant cure but as the SSRI anti-depressant took hold, her outlook slowly changed. I’m holding my breath on this one.

Lynn was as depressed or more depressed than my mother. Things were coming to a head on the construction project and I saw a Cummins dealer delivering a large generator. The generator went on a separate slab that had some sort of spring loaded manhole cover. After it was installed, the contractor erected forms and poured 12” walls around the sides. They included that blast door I’d seen on Utah Shelter Systems website and the forms were left in place for several days, allowing the concrete to set up.

I hadn't notice the two I beams, but they were inset into the concrete and topped by ½" steel plate. Additional forming went in and 12 additional inches of concrete covered the roof. Next an electrician came out and ran the wires from the transformer underground to the generator house and from there to the basement of the log home. The label on the generator was DSFAD. I looked it on the Cummins website, 55kw, 250 amp and diesel.

One day coming home from work, I passed a diesel tanker pulling out of their driveway. It was about 10,000 gallons. Two days later, I passed a 3,000 gallon propane delivery truck just leaving their small acreage.

"Are they filling the fuel tanks now?"

"They have been for several days."

"Just how big are the tanks?"

"The propane is a recertified commercial 30,000 tank with a wet leg to refill bottles. I think mom said the gasoline tank was small, 5,000 gallons. The backbreaker has been filling that 40,000 gallon containment solutions diesel tank. Didn't you notice the small slab with the fuel dispenser?"

"Afraid not. How are you feeling? I was starting to get worried."

"I've been taking some comfort from the Old Testament, Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3, Verse 1, *To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.*"

"Yep, 'Turn, Turn, Turn'."

"What's that?"

"A song based on that chapter. I think it was performed by the Byrds. We saw Forrest Gump didn't we? The Byrds version was played up in the movie. I think everyone has recorded the song and I know it was featured in several movies because I looked it up on Wiki one evening after I heard it on an oldies station."

Perhaps the reason I didn't notice the pump was because the slab it set on was an extension of the garage slab. Paul must have had big plans because the garage had six stalls including a lubrication pit and two stories famed in. It appeared that it would be sheathed in D shaped tongue and groove logs. Both the log home and the garage ran on an east-west line and faced each other. If Paul wanted PV panels or thin film PV shingles, he could generate a fair amount of power.

The construction crews were putting in overtime and I assumed that Paul had included a bonus for meeting a completion deadline. It turned out that I hit that nail square on the head. It appeared to me that the roofing was standard asphalt shingles and I got that

right, too. After the roofs were completed, yet another contractor came in and began install large solar panels. I checked a box and they were Schott ASE-300-DGF/50 panels. They were large and appeared to be fairly heavy. The length looked to be around 6' and the width about 4'.

I looked them up and found out that each panel was 74½" long and 50½" wide. They weighed 107 pounds ± 5 pounds. They were rated a 50vdc and 300 watts. Each covered ~26ft². This home of theirs might look like a simple upscale log home but considering the facts that were accumulating, it was anything but simple.

I hadn't been there to see the shipment of Exide submarine batteries stored in the basement nor the racks of inverters or charge controllers. There were two banks of 24 of the 2.2vdc batteries connected in series with the banks connected in parallel. Each battery held 7,000 amps or 15,400 watts times 24 was 369,600 watts per bank times 2 was 739.2kw.

If my math is right, and I'm sure it is, 739,200 divided by 300 watts equals 2,464 hours for just one panel to charge both banks. Better round that to at least 2,500 to allow for the batteries losing some charge. But, when they were done installing the PV panels I went over and counted them. Three rows on each building times 12 panels per row on the home and 17 panels per row on the garage. That made a total of 87 very expensive 300 watt panels. Assuming 100% efficiency, that was 300 times 87 or 26,100 watts per hour for an average of 12 hours per day, a total of 313,200 watts per day.

I must have slipped a decimal somewhere, could those 87 panels really charge 48 submarine batteries in 29½ hours? I didn't have to worry about it; it was Paul's problem, not mine, if it didn't work out. Understand, the average home uses about 12kwh per day. In really hot climates with central air, it might run 24kwh per day in the hot months. Looking at our usage wouldn't really represent how much power Paul and Alice might use, either.

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Work... I've never mention what I do for a living. I started working for an auto parts store right out of high school. Sort of learning the business from the bottom up. The company, it doesn't matter what their name is, got into an expansion mode and came up with a management training program. I applied and was accepted and ended up an Assistant Manager in the store I started in. The positions of Manager and Assistant Manager were salaried with bonuses. The Assistant Manager's bonus was about half of what the Manager got.

After a while as the Assistant Manager, my Manager got promoted to Area Manager and I managed to get his slot. It meant a significant raise and a doubled bonus. That's when I finally passed Lynn in earnings. Most jobs are like the military, I think. The higher up you get, the smaller the number of available positions. Due to the company's growth

spurt, they had a large number of younger people in the middle management positions. My former Manager was only 7 years older than I was...

I, obviously, was never in the military. That's ok, TOM was, Jungle Work was, Seventh Fleet was, Grand was and I tried to glean what pearls of wisdom about military things that I could. Until Global Security decided to charge \$10 a month to read their out dated information, I managed to copy a lot of it to document files, too. Learned about the Mk 211 MP there and visits to other sites gave me even more information on the cartridge. TOM always seemed to want the ballistically matched M1022 cartridge for his Barrett or more recently his Tac-50. It may be ballistically matched to the Raufoss, but so what? That Hornady was the cat's meow.

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Arron Perry a former Master Corporal in the Canadian Forces who in March 2002 briefly held the record for the longest recorded sniper kill in combat at a range of 2,310m (2,526yd). This shot exceeded the previous record of Carlos Hathcock set in 1968 by 24m (26yd). Perry's record was surpassed in March 2002 by another member of his sniper team Corporal Rob Furlong, who shot a Taliban fighter at a range of 2,430m (2,657yd). Both used McMillan the LRSW (Tac-50) rifles with substitute ammo, Hornady 750gr A-MAX Match.

Page 3...

In December 2003, PPCLI snipers Master Corporal Graham Ragsdale, Master Corporal Tim McMeekin, Corporal Dennis Eason, Corporal Rob Furlong and Master Corporal Arron Perry were awarded the Bronze Star by the US Army for their actions in combat during Operation Anaconda, March 2–11, 2002.

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Now, a day light shot with my 12-42 Night Force and the wind to my back... maybe I could give Carlos a run for this money, although I doubt it... 2,280 m (2,500 yd). You breathe and you change the point of impact by feet, not inches.

"Mom called. The papers are signed and she was on the way to Sea-Tac. Daddy is driving her car down pulling a U-Haul with the last of their things. I'll go up and meet her at Flagstaff. The movers haven't shown up, yet. They'll probably be here by the time we get back. He's not going to drive straight through, so it will take him two days. Get this; the log home has all new appliances, a wood burning fireplace, wood burning kitchen stove and a wood/coal furnace. And, June has agreed to close up her apartment and move to Bridgeport."

"I may be about 30 minute's late Lynn; we have a late delivery of batteries coming in. Can you hold supper?"

“No problem, I thought we’d eat out.”

“Where do you want me to meet you?”

“Jerome Palace?”

“Sounds good. The truck is just pulling in. I’ll be there in a jiffy.”

It only took about 20 minutes to unload the batteries and lock up. I washed up and headed for Jerome’s. They were just pulling in. Jerome Palace is located in the little burg named Jerome west of Cottonwood and on or near the top of the mountain. The food is outstanding. It’s on the road from Cottonwood to Prescott.

“Everything go ok?”

“Well... the contract called for them to unload and unpack. When they were done unloading, they started to leave and Mom asked who was going to do the unpacking. They said it was a service and they’d let them know they were needed tomorrow to unpack. I think we’ll stay up late and get the shelf paper in the cabinets and drawers.”

“Good luck.”

“Oh?”

“Moving companies are notorious for selling the unpacking service but don’t do it if they can avoid it.”

“We’ll see about that,” Alice commented.

“How do you like the new home?”

“It’s great. More than I expected. Our old furniture will go in the shelter and we’re going to buy new.”

“I don’t mean to be rude. The home and all the extras must have cost a bunch.”

“It did, but it’s our retirement home David. I like it because we have a woodstove and wood/coal furnace in addition to a fireplace. It may take a while to get readjusted to a wood stove, but when I do, you’ll love the bread. On top of that, you saw the PV panels and they are hooked into two banks of 24 2.2volt submarine batteries. It’s unlikely we’ll need the generator very often, if at all. So, there’s commercial power available and two forms of backup power.”

“What about the garage?”

Arizona Black – Chapter 5

“You mean the two stories? Storage space. We most definitely aren’t short on storage space.”

“Submarine batteries? I understood they’re expensive.”

“You heard right. They have a life expectancy of 35 years. Those PV panels can recharge the batteries in just a couple of days. Paul can give you the particulars.”

“What’s left to finish up?”

“Just the landscaping. All that entails are some dwarf fruit and nut trees and desert landscaping.”

“What else?”

“That’s about it. The new furniture for upstairs, of course.”

Have you been paying attention? I was keeping an unofficial total in my head and if I’m a judge they have to have at least a million in their place. How did that square Paul saying they only held back about \$355. Some came from the sale of their home. I’d only seen it the one time and held no idea what it would bring. I soon found out... enough for everything they did, leaving them about \$100,000, still in gold and silver.

Bill Gate’s home cost a bit more than theirs, to the tune of \$145 million plus. Paul and Alice were drawing his Boeing pension, her 401k and both Social Security. He brought down his remaining firearms and chest freezer powered by a 6kw gasoline portable generator. I am definitely in the wrong job!

I may be wrong, but... when you think about, 40k of diesel was around 120k, 30k of propane was another 60k, 5k of premium unleaded another 15k, 87 PV panels probably on the order of 125k, installed. The home, I had no idea, maybe 100k. New furniture depended on what they bought and it turned out to be Ethan Allen. A new 55kw generator an easy 10k, 48 submarine batteries, say 3 grand each, another 144k. The charge controller(s), not cheap but I have no idea. Six 10kw inverters, no clue. I was guessing about 650 grand, total.

Paul pulled in the next day and parked the trailer in the garage and ran an extension cord for the freezer. Mom, Alice and Lynn had dinner in the oven and it was about an hour from being done. I offered Paul a taste of Single Barrel and made myself an Old Fashioned using the Canadian Club.

“Have any trouble?”

“Not a bit. House went for 675 grand net of the commission. That left us sitting on a little over a million. Came through Nevada on the trip down and stopped to see a long-time friend. Picked up a few things that may interest you. That will keep. I’m going to need some help moving the big old freezer to the basement and gun safes to the shelter.”

“Your basement is pretty crowded between the rack of charge controllers and inverters plus the 48 batteries.”

“Any idea where I can find someone to help with the freezer?”

“Full or empty?”

“Nearly full, Stuart Anderson’s Black Angus Beef, plus two cut and wrapped hogs. I figured on getting hams and bacon down here. Want to get a box of chickens too.”

“If you want, we can dig out my appliance cart and move it tonight.”

“It’s plugged in and I’m tired. Is tomorrow ok?”

“Sure, it’s not my weekend to work.”

“Oh, that’s right, you work every other Saturday. How’s Lynn doing?”

“She’s pretty much made her adjustment. My mother is living here now, too. Finally got her in to see a shrink and he prescribed something. It’s an SSRI, but I’m not really sure which one.”

The trailer contained the large chest freezer and two large Fort Knox gun safes. We moved the safes first... they went into the subbasement. The frozen meat was transferred to a 4 wheeled cart I had. It was about 3’ long by 2½’ wide by 3’ deep and held most of the meat. What wouldn’t fit, we put on their kitchen counter. The freezer went down to the basement. Compared to moving two very heavy gun safes, that was easy. After putting the meat back in the freezer, we took his firearms down to the shelter.

Paul had quite the collection. He didn’t have one of everything although he obviously had a special place in his heart for certain military firearms or clones thereof. He had nothing from the World War One period. He had before and after, however, including .45-70 Springfield carbines, Colt SAAs in .45 Colt and .44-40, Winchester ‘73s (2) in .44-40, an 1886 in .45-70, and a pair of 1892s in .44-40. In the other safe, he stored his NFA weapons. There was a pair of Thompson submachine guns model 1928A1 with Cutts Compensators. He had 2 50 round drum magazines and a lot of the 30 round sticks. What I mistook for Garand’s initially, turned out to be BM-59s.

The rifle that stole his heart was the M-14. He had 4 Loaded, 2 Super Match and 2 M-21s, all with very good glass and Surefire adapters. The latter four also had Harris

bipods. I didn't see a single AR-15 or M-16 but I did see HK-416s and 417s. He also had an M82A1M.

"Want to ride along up to Flagstaff to turn in the trailer?"

"Sure. We can have lunch when we get back."

"It's ten thirty. That will put us back around twelve thirty. Is that a problem?"

"Not at all."

After we dropped off the trailer, Paul stopped by a market and ordered a case of Hormel Cure 81 hams, a case of thick sliced bacon and a full box of frying chickens packed in ice. He made one more stop at the discount liquor store I used and ordered a case of Single Barrel. It was one before we were home.

Over the next week, they bought the Ethan Allen furniture and got their home set up fully ready to occupy. Paul made a trip back to Flagstaff to pick up his hams, bacon, chickens and Jack Daniels. They also made a trip to Prescott to visit the Costco store. The following week, he had the contractor back out finishing off the basement, nearly identical to ours. I hadn't notice the stubbed off water and septic pipes. Paul didn't put in a beer tap, electing instead to stock imported bottled beer, Amstel Light and Grolsch Premium Pilsner, in a back bar refrigerator. He said he wasn't a fan of Becks or Heinekens.

After they got settled, he had the unused portion of their acreage fenced with a wooden fence, added a Castlebrook Barn and moved the four horses over to their place. A second well went in, manure was spread and incorporated and grass planted to provide pasture for the four geldings. Finally, the five of us were invited over for dinner and a tour of their new home.

"What do you think? Can I pick 'em or not?"

"Very, very nice. How did you end up coming out?"

"Do you mean cost? Right at \$800k. Of course most of the cost is hidden like the subbasement, fuel tanks, generator and huge battery banks. It's a minor step up from our Seattle home but totally self-sufficient. Plus if you want some practice harvesting firewood, you have you first customer. I bought five cords of hardwood and a cord of softwood kindling plus filled the coal room with anthracite. That coal room is 12'x12'x8', about 1,152ft². It took 28 tons of coal to fill the room and leave a little space to get in and out. Cost \$120/ton plus shipping and delivery from the railhead. Total was about five grand or \$180 a ton."

"Where did it come from?"

“Northeastern Pennsylvania.”

“Are you all done?”

“Just about. The hay and grain for the horses will come tomorrow and that should have it finished.”

“You said something about stopping in Nevada on your way down.”

“You saw what I was talking about but didn’t realize it. Those H&K HK-416s and HK-417s are new, select fire models. There are 4 barrels for each 416 rifle and 3 for each 417. The barrels each have a life of 20,000 rounds. There are a total of 8 of each rifle. Some are still sealed in the box. There are 20 magazines per rifle and rebuild kits. He’s shipping ACOGs for each of the rifles.

“I’d better check around on 5.56 prices.”

“Got it covered. One hundred ammo cans of M855A1 EPRs on strippers, 420 rounds per can. Also got Lake City surplus 7.62 ball for the 417s.”

“You broke yet?”

“Nope. I’m done spending money for a while until our checkbooks fill up a little. Pretty much limited to groceries and utilities.”

“That won’t amount to much, electric, phone, garbage and cable bill plus keeping all the fuels including coal and wood topped off. Anything I can add?”

“Get as many Beta C mags for the HK-416s and 417s as you can afford. You only need two of the 5.56 systems, which run about \$264. You can get just the magazines, graphite and instruction book for \$220. If you buy five plain, you save enough to pay for the sixth. After the first round of eight, all you need to buy more of is the plain. I think maybe three per rifle would be enough. For the 417s, the system runs about \$450 and the plain \$395.”

“May I ask you a question?”

“You can ask. If I choose to answer, it will be the truth.”

“Do you have anything in particular in mind with respect to why we’re preparing for World War Three?”

“First there were five and later six plus two made eight plus one made nine but they stopped. Then it went back to nine and ten. Today, it’s fifteen, for sure and we have no idea how many there really are.”

“Nuclear powers?”

“Bingo, give the man a cigar. When it was the big five, it was bad. However, there was some stability; we got through the Cuban Missile Crisis. They called it the Cold War because we managed to avoid turning it into a hot war... Global Thermonuclear War. Ronald Reagan bankrupted the Soviet Union because they couldn't fight the war in Afghanistan and maintain parity with the West. It was that 600 ship navy that did them in.

“David, I don't trust all these newcomers with the bomb. Hiroshima and Nagasaki happened 70 years ago. There aren't many people alive to remember the horror of an atom bomb. These days, they don't even have to drop a bomb. Now, they flip a switch and off she goes and will get there in 30 minutes.”

“Lynn says that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is just a piece of paper.”

“She's right. Article X allows a state to leave the treaty if "extraordinary events, related to the subject matter of this Treaty, have jeopardized the supreme interests of its country", giving three months' (ninety days') notice. The state is required to give reasons for leaving the NPT in this notice.

“NATO states argue that when there is a state of 'general war' the treaty no longer applies, effectively allowing the states involved to leave the treaty with no notice. This is a necessary argument to support the NATO nuclear weapons sharing policy, but a troubling one for the logic of the treaty. NATO's argument is based on the phrase 'the consequent need to make every effort to avert the danger of such a war' in the treaty preamble, inserted at the behest of US diplomats, arguing that the treaty would at that point have failed to fulfill its function of prohibiting a general war and thus no longer be binding. Many states do not accept this argument. Consequently five became ten became fifteen.”

“Chavez wouldn't dare.”

“Probably not against us, but Brazil isn't that far away, IRBM range. A MRBM has a range from 1,000 to 3,000km. An IRBM has a range of 3,000 to 5,500km. Israel has ICBMs, the Jericho 3 with a range up to 11,500km. Iran has successfully test fired the MRBM Sejil-2 with a range of 2,000-2,500km. I'm not so concerned over a country like Germany or Japan developing nuclear weapons. The others will need to be watched.”

“So watch the countries that cozy up to Russia, China and North Korea?”

“Yep. I meant ask David, do you have one of those NOAA, NWS radios.”

“Several Paul. We have portables that go where we go and one in the basement, living room and master bedroom. For no more than they cost, a person would be silly not to have them. We don't get a lot of warnings down in this area, but like Karl Malden used

to say on the AMEX ads, we never leave home without one. Why, are you expecting something that I should be aware of?"

"Not particularly. It's mostly curiosity. After Lynn and you got married, it seemed like between our jobs and your jobs we never got a chance to be a family. Obviously you're into preparedness at about the level we are. God willing, we've invested a fortune in preparations we'll never need."

"Yep, prepare for the worst and hope for the best. Or, as many of the PAW fiction writers remind us, would you rather have it and not need it or need it and not have it."

"You haven't said anything about knives. Anything special?"

"I don't know how special they are, but we favor Cold Steel mostly because of availability. We had a pair of San Mai Laredo Bowies but added a second pair shortly after Jordan and Paul were born. Since they're so large, we added Counter Tacs and Buck Folding Hunters. The only other blades we have besides the bayonets are the 24" Latin machetes."

"Our BOBs each contain the usual assortment of survival gear, Katadyn filter, Micropur tablets, three different fire starters, bath tissue from Minimus, gum, energy bars, and a Swiss Army Knife. They're close to their fourth birthdays, and ready to move up from the Bearcats to Single Six revolvers. They're on order. We got decent holsters and inexpensive cartridge belts. Since they'll be riding in another year, we got rifle scabbards for the horses. I'm sure we probably overlooked something, but it is a learning process with kids. I picked up a brick of CCI shorts to introduce them to their .22s. Have you tried Nitro Pak?"

"Lynn ordered something from them but I haven't talked to her to find out what. I know she talked to Alice before placing the order. I've said before and I'll say it again, prepping is a damned expensive proposition."

"Man, you don't know the half of it. Take those H&K rifles for example. They weren't cheap and I added extra magazines, ACOGs and the Surefire suppressors. Do you have any idea how much 16 suppressors cost?"

"Between twenty-five and thirty grand?"

"Exactly. Now a suppressor isn't mandatory, but they do give you the advantage of concealment both by concealing the muzzle flash and confusing your target as to the source of the shot."

"So, are we missing anything?"

"I take it from something you said that you've read some of TOM's and Jerry's stories."

“Guilty as charged. In fact something TOM said led me to not buy the M-25 and select the M-21. But the M-21s weren’t available at the time and I got a Super Match, added a good scope, leather cheek rest and Harris bipod. I think it’s as good as the M-21.”

“I agree; I’m not enchanted with that adjustable synthetic stock on the M-21. Anyway, it’s getting late and I wanted to swap out the rechargeable batteries in our NOAA radios.”

That sounded like good advice and I did the same. The replacements were fully charged rechargeable batteries and I changed all five sets. The radios were purchased from Oregon Scientific and were either WRB603, a base with removable radio, or WR602, a similar portable with a charging stand. The batteries were AA Lithium batteries that lasted about 8 times longer than whatever they replaced.

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A year later, on the kids 5th birthdays, Grandpa Paul presented the twins with his first purchase, the Ruger Bearcats and Winchester 9422s. It went well for about the first minute, until little Paul pointed the Bearcat at someone.

“Paul, stop! Let me have your revolver! It appears you’re not ready for these until you learn some gun safety.”

The firearms were, naturally, unloaded. It was an opportunity to make a point. The firearms were put up and the other presents passed out, followed by cake and ice cream.

Thus began the lessons on firearms safety:

- A firearm is not a toy. It is a tool, designed for a specific purpose.
- Always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction.
- Keep your finger off the trigger until you are actually aiming at the target and ready to shoot.
- Treat every gun as if it is LOADED...ALL THE TIME!
- Be sure of your target and backstop before you shoot. Ask yourself what your bullet will hit if it misses or goes through the target. The bullet can travel over a mile.
- Place the safety ON when not shooting.

“Five may be old enough to ‘own’ a firearm, but until those two can recite the safety rules backwards and forwards and understand the reason for the rules, they’re not going to handle those firearms, Daddy.”

“I guess five is a little too young.”

“Paul, you can keep adding to their firearms collections, every year if you want. God knows you have enough for the next ten years. However, we’ll wait another year or more before they can shoot their firearms.”

“Ok, David, fair enough. I have lots of free time on my hands, I’ll teach them gun safety and handling. When I deem them ready, I’ll consult with Lynn and you and we’ll go from there.”

Paul and I adjourned to the basement for a drink.

“Any speculation as to who number sixteen is?”

“I’d be speculating about the same as the media. It could be anyone with a nuclear reactor and that includes a lot of countries these days. I’m sure that TPTB are trying to find out who supplied the centrifuges to whom.”

“No doubt. Many countries have the idea that it’s nobody’s business what they have and do as long as they don’t use the weapons against another country.”

“One of these days there’s going to be nuclear parity. The little countries will have as many weapons as the big ten.”

“I heard one estimate that the weapon went about 150kT.”

“Fox fan, huh? I heard the same estimate. They went on to say that it could have been anyone because it was Sub Launched Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (SLIRBM). Have you read anything or heard anything about sales of missile subs?”

“Not one word and I checked all my usual sources and a couple of new ones.”

“Oh, I meant to tell you, I’m up for Area Manager. It will mean a substantial raise and a bonus based on the profits of the stores in my area. This company doesn’t believe in moving its personnel to different areas. If I get the job, I’ll be working out of our home and on the road a lot.”

“How many stores in the area?”

“Fifteen. The way they’re arranged creates three separate travel loops. The thing about it is, I’m not sure I want to be gone from home that much. I’m not so sure the travel and my absence will be offset by the additional pay. Ten of the fifteen store Managers are in consideration so maybe I won’t get it this time around.”

“You sound like you’re not sure you want the promotion.”

“I’m not sure I do. You know how some of the writers always claimed it was a matter of when, not if, don’t you?”

“The surviving ones are still saying it. How old is TOM?”

“Mid-seventies, I think. That surprises me with all of his health problems.”

“And Jerry?”

“Younger, mid-sixties I think and he’s even worse off than TOM. He’s the one with the long list of possibilities. I’m sure he missed some because Spock claimed there were infinite possibilities.”

“Nimoy died, you know. I think he was 85.”

“When was that?”

“Maybe last year. Doc died in ’99, Scotty in ’05, Chapel in ’08, Kirk in ’12 and Spock last year.”

“We should live so long.”

“We could, you know. Because of modern medicine, people are living longer. The number of centurions is triple what it was not all that long ago.”

“What was the plane you were working on when you retired?”

“The 787 freighter. It’s a little more involved than just removing the seats, you know.”

“At least you finally got the tanker contract.”

“That was a messy business. A lot of politics were involved.”

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On the kids sixth birthdays, Paul gave them Bearcat revolvers, again. He’d spent the last year instilling gun safety and gun handling. Just the day before, they’d gotten the opportunity to shoot their revolvers and rifles using .22 shorts in the revolver and in the 9422s. They looked funny in their earmuffs. Their rifles were marked S-L-L.R. on the left side.

“Since the two of you demonstrated safe firearms handling yesterday, I decided to give you the next step up in the Ruger .22 series of revolvers and Winchester rifles. These are about the same but weigh more. We’ll start you with the shorts and move to the longs and the long rifle cartridges. These are the cowboy style with the 6½” barrels and two cylinders, the .22LR and the .22 Magnum cylinders. The rifle only shoots the .22 Winchester magnum cartridges. We’ll study these and you’ll get to shoot them soon.”

Winchester may have gone belly up but they were still around offering a portion of their previous product line. One such product that was purchased and put up was the model 92 in .45 Colt. Lynn and I bought those and had 4 put up for an appropriate moment. We bought those right after the twins were born, never realizing at the time that the twins would be our only two children. The actions were every bit as smooth as the actions of the 9422s.

I don't get the promotion, it went to a fellow that ran one of the other stores and I believed I actually breathed a sigh of relief. During the past year, yet another nuclear weapon was tested by an unknown party. It had a yield of one megaton. It was described as a fission-fusion-fission type of weapon. It was a SLBM and was tracked by satellites for 10,550 miles before detonation over Antarctica. Little did we know that in the not too distant future, the fears that had gripped the world since the USSR exploded its first nuclear weapon would be realized.

"Is it time?"

"What do you mean?"

"Lock and load time."

"Is he still around?"

"He still posts an occasional comment. He hasn't posted a story for a long time, though."

"It couldn't hurt to get more of the Tattler lids that Lynn switched to and extra rings while we're at it."

"They're pretty expensive."

"Our checkbooks have recovered nicely. We'll foot the bill. How are the jars holding out?"

"Talk about over buying. We still have about $\frac{3}{4}$ of them new in the box."

"You order seven units from Walton and we'll buy seven from Mountain House. Pay for expedited shipping, it would be nice to get the food this year. How are we on ammo?"

"That's like toilet paper; you can never have too much."

"Do an inventory and between us, we'll fill any gaps."

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I had started smoking later in life, during my 40s, and attributed it to the stress of my job. I had been double buying smokes from the very beginning and storing them

beneath the shelter floor. The higher they went, the more I bought... they never went down in price. The latest purchase cost me \$60 a carton. I did the inventory of ammo and made a list of what we were short of. I talked to the guy at work and asked if he could get more of the Mk 211. He agreed to try, but it wouldn't be cheap.

Arizona Black – Chapter 6

*The eastern world, it is exploding
Violence flarin', bullets loadin'
You're old enough to kill, but not for votin'
You don't believe in war, but what's that gun you're totin'
And even the Jordan River has bodies floatin'*

*But you tell me
Over and over and over again, my friend
Ah, you don't believe
We're on the eve
of destruction.*

*Don't you understand what I'm tryin' to say
Can't you feel the fears I'm feelin' today?
If the button is pushed, there's no runnin' away
There'll be no one to save, with the world in a grave
[Take a look around ya boy, it's bound to scare ya boy]*

*And you tell me
Over and over and over again, my friend
Ah, you don't believe
We're on the eve
of destruction.*

*Yeah, my blood's so mad feels like coagulatin'
I'm sitting here just contemplatin'
I can't twist the truth, it knows no regulation.
Handful of senators don't pass legislation
And marches alone can't bring integration
When human respect is disintegratin'
This whole crazy world is just too frustratin'*

*And you tell me
Over and over and over again, my friend
Ah, you don't believe
We're on the eve
of destruction.*

*Think of all the hate there is in Red China
Then take a look around to Selma, Alabama
You may leave here for 4 days in space
But when you return, it's the same old place
The poundin' of the drums, the pride and disgrace
You can bury your dead, but don't leave a trace
Hate your next-door neighbor, but don't forget to say grace
And... tell me over and over and over and over again, my friend
You don't believe
We're on the eve
Of destruction
Mm, no no, you don't believe
We're on the eve
of destruction.*

(Barry McGuire – Eve of Destruction - Vietnam era war protest song)

We ordered extra Hornady A-MAX in 168gr and 178gr .308 and 750gr .50 BMG. We also added surplus M855A1 and M856. Speer probably had to run a second or third shift; we needed several calibers, 9mm, .45ACP and .45 Colt. This purchase ran $\frac{2}{3}$ Gold Dot and $\frac{1}{3}$ Lawman except for the .45 Colt which was all Gold Dot.

I went through each vehicle and made a list of parts like replacement discs, belts, hoses, filters and everything electronic. It all went into the space beneath my shelter floor. The radiological instruments were sent to North Dakota and recalibrated. Paul placed an order for 10 cases each of .22LR and .22 WRM, 50-50 solid point and hollow point.

Although Paul had a radio antenna tower and a complete assortment of radios, we had a US Towers Monopole installed with a complete set of antennas mounted including business band, CB, UHF/VHF and an HF vertical. Paul had beams for long distance communications. His amateur equipment was all Yaesu and I chose Kenwood in part and Icom in part. We didn't need to purchase business band radios because he had installed them in our vehicles and put one in our shelter and a second in the house. I put Cobra SSB CBs in the vehicles and Galaxy SSB radios in the house and shelter. We did buy two extra Kenwood TS-2000s to install in the vehicles post whatever. The radios were mounted on slide out mounts.

“We can't be any more ready than we are. What's your best guess?”

“A holiday and probably during warm weather.”

“Easter though Columbus Day?”

“Easter though Labor Day. Some parts of the country get cold by Columbus Day and some states don't observe it. I'm going to get a contractor to make a few changes.”

“Like what?”

“We have a lot of horses. We have our four, the two geldings you gave us and the two mares you’ve put up in our barn. Your horse barn is full. That’s a lot of expensive horseflesh. I’ll have him put in tunnels connecting our shelters to our barns and go with that double wall construction containing a layer of soil. Those hay burners are going to earn their keep.”

Foundations were poured five feet out from the barn walls and frame walls made of 2x6s and OSB were bolted to the footings. There were no PV panels on the barn and the contractor reinforced the roofs and ran second roofs, at the same distance, to above the peaks. The empty space was filled with augured in soil. The estimated PF was ~2,000. Once the animals were protected, automatic feeding and watering systems were installed.

The really neat aspect of the modification was the doors on either end of the barns. Here, the contractor essentially built boxes to hold the soil. The bottom wheels ran on yet another, curved, footing. Our tunnel came into the generator room through an American Safe Rooms blast door and theirs directly into their shelter through yet another USS blast door. That was a major modification to their shelter, requiring the removal of several feet of the wall where the door would be installed.

When we were ‘done’, we checked and rechecked, looking for anything we might have possibly missed. I bought more smokes, extra bath tissue and coffee, oil and so forth. Lynn bought a lifetime supply of dried pasta that never goes bad if properly stored. The beer wouldn’t keep but I did add additional liquor; some for drinking and some as medical alcohol. Lynn checked our over-the-counter medications and added several more along with various bandages, tape, blood clotting supplies and normal saline with IV sets that she talked her OB/GYN into. Normal saline is rather innocuous. It doesn’t really hurt you and can be used to bulk up your blood, if necessary. We didn’t add any CroFab, considering the price. (\$5,000 per box of 2 vials of 1 gram of freeze dried anti-venin.)

When we thought we were done, Alice, Mom and Lynn went shopping for clothing. Jeans seemed to be the order of the day along with work shirts and blouses. Mom was skinny and jeans worked well for her. The same applied to Lynn and Alice went on a diet. We had summer jackets, winter coats, dusters and Drover’s coats with removable fleece linings. The footwear was moderately priced high top western boots. Hats were either felt or straw and they had chin straps.

Thanksgiving came and went, as did Christmas, as did New Years, as did the early spring holidays. Easter came and went and we kept our eyes and ears open. We were on high alert on Independence Day... nothing. We celebrated the twins 7th birthdays and they got clothing and firearms. As we approached Labor Day 2019, all of the adults

were holding their breaths. Paul and I had been right... to an extent. The Oregon Scientific radios all went off.

Standby for an announcement by the White House.

My fellow Americans,

Several countries around the world are under attack by ballistic missiles excluding the United States and Russia. This announcement is precautionary only. With US troops stationed in various worldwide locations, I am declaring a Defense Emergency, which is a major attack upon US forces overseas, or allied forces in any area, and is confirmed either by the commander of a unified or specified command or higher authority or an overt attack of any type is made upon the United States and is confirmed by the commander of a unified or specified command or higher authority.

As a result, all US forces, worldwide, are at DEFCON 1.

We are in contact with Russian authorities and they are tracking the attacks along with the United States. If an attack upon the continental United States, Canada, or US installations in Greenland by hostile aircraft or missiles is considered probable, is imminent, or is taking place, we will declare an Air Defense Emergency.

Please stay tuned to your local media for further announcements.

“Lock and load?”

“Not yet. It might be a good idea to check the livestock and secure the barns.”

“Anything else?”

“I suppose we could try and get the fuel tanks topped off David. I wouldn't hold my breath. It will probably be first come, first served.”

“I get on the phone Daddy.”

“David, you may wish to grab your HK-417 or Super Match. You can also carry the HK USP Tactical or P-14, your choice.”

“I'll take my P-14 with my Warthog as backup. I'll take both rifles and my shotgun.”

“Loan me the USP Tactical?”

“Sure.”

While Lynn was on the phones trying to line up additional fuel, Paul and I collected the weapons and put the long arms in the rear window rack of my pickup. We used the

pickup to push the barn doors closed after we'd put down extra hay for the horses. After the doors were closed and locked, we drove over to Paul and Alice's and essentially did the same thing. Paul collected his and Alice's H&K rifles and his USP Tacticals along with her Browning Hi-Power. Just before we left to return to our place, a fuel tanker with a mixed load of diesel and gasoline pulled in. He had barely connected to the diesel tank when a propane tanker pulled in to top off Paul's tank.

"Do you have David and Lynn Johnstone on your list?"

"You're next. Next door, right?"

"Right."

Paul and I returned to our house and he and I stored our weapons in the living room gun case. The delivery tanker soon showed up and Paul signed the delivery receipts for their place and ours. And when the driver's each told him the deliveries were COD, shelled out the cash.

"What have you heard?"

"Just some of the details; Pakistan started it, launching their entire stock of weapons against India. Simultaneously, North Korea launched seven missiles against Japan. Japan responded in kind, reserving their extra missiles. China retaliated on behalf of North Korea and Japan expended their remaining missiles against China.

"Iran launched 3 missiles on Israel which Israel failed to intercept. Israel then either launched missiles or fighter bombers, eliminating every Middle Eastern country from Morocco to Egypt and Sudan in Africa during which time their missiles were launched at their Middle Eastern Arab neighbors. For sure, they hit Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, several of the Emirates and Saudi Arabia. The three missiles hit Israel at Haifa, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem."

"Any word on who conducted those nuclear tests?"

"The Republic of China. Apparently they built 4 scaled down diesel electric submarines base on the German 212 class. Each carried 12 MIRV'd solid fuel missiles. China launched on Russia and the ROC retaliated against the PRC, taking out any targets the Russians didn't hit. Russia wasn't hit badly because China had so few ICBMs and some of those they had failed on launch or during staging. Any that made it were taken down by Russia's nuclear ABMs."

"What about China's SSBNs?"

"Don't worry about them, we sunk them."

"But, how?"

“The suggestion is that the White House and DOD expected the attack and had made advance preparations, including putting the Seawolf, Connecticut and Jimmy Carter to sea as a blockade along with the available Virginia-class and a few 688I-class submarines. You know how well armed the Seawolf is.”

“And the United States?”

“The few launched against the US were taken out by SM-3s, Patriot 3s or THAAD missiles.”

“Are we still at DEFCON 1?”

“As far as we’ve heard, the Defense Emergency is still in force.”

“Thank God for PALs.”

“David is referring to Permissive Action Links, ladies. That’s the system we have in place to prevent some nut from launching or detonating an active nuclear weapon.”

“I think we have our quota of crackpots already. Of the sixteen known or suspected nuclear powers, only the US didn’t attack anyone. I find it interesting that Russia only retaliated against the only country to hit them, China.”

“The entire purpose of the hotline was communications during times of emergency. After the Thule crash, Russia and the US agreed to notify each other of incidents that could lead to misinterpretations. As far as our being at DEFCON 1, that should change as more information is acquired,” Paul observed.

“And until we know something, here we sit and don’t dare start anything that we may not have time to finish.”

“David, how are you fixed on vacation?”

“I have four weeks accumulated. Why?”

“Can your Assistant Manager handle the store?”

“I don’t see why not, what’s on your mind?”

“Electricity. We have extra PV panels giving us a total of 96. It would be a good idea to move 48 over here and get them mounted on your roof. You only need one charge controller for each battery bank. Three inverters should be enough, that’s 21kw. The batteries weigh about half a ton wet but they won’t be difficult to move. I have two battery carts and the landing section at the top of the stairs is removable. They were

instructed to leave the hoist anchor and hoist in case we needed to replace a battery. I think we could do everything in a week.”

“How much power would 48 panels provide?”

“114.4kwh or an average of 172,800kw per 12 hour day. The inverters are rated at 94% efficient so you should get close to 162.5kw per day, depending on the sun.”

“I’m game, where do we start?”

“We move the inverters first. Then, we’ll set them up and wire them through a manual transfer switch between generator power and sun power. The next step would be to move the PV panels in case we don’t have time to move the batteries. The final step would be to move the batteries. I think we can do 8 per day, so that will take about 3 days. You can always add an ATS between the generator and inverters.”

“It’s not that late. Do you want to go after the first batch of equipment? Lynn can pick up the manual switch from the electrical supply along with any cable and wire we might need.”

“Lynn, we’ll need 2 gauge and 4/0 gauge stranded AWG. Write it down if you can’t remember. David, let’s see how much room you have on the unfinished side in the basement.”

“Well?”

“If you’ll move that set of shelving that’s against the basement wall, I go after the inverters. When I get back, we’ll go over and start uninstalling panels. The spare panels are in the basement with the batteries.”

“We’re going to need to stop when it gets dark.”

“Nah, we just switch to hauling batteries. Alice, can June and you throw together some leftovers from the lunch we never finished. Say, potato salad and sandwiches?”

“When do you want it?”

“In thirty minutes when I bring back to inverters.”

I emptied what little was on the shelves and pushed them down an empty aisle we seldom used. As I arrived upstairs, Paul pulled in so we moved the three 7kw inverters to the finished side of the basement and went back upstairs for a bite to eat. Mom had made a pitcher of lemonade from concentrate so we had sandwiches, potato salad and lemonade. Shortly after we started to eat, Lynn returned with the cables.”

“Have any trouble?”

“A little, it’s Labor Day, remember? I tracked the owner down and told him we had an emergency and really need the 4/0 and 2 gauge cable. I bought one box of each of the black, white, red and green and if you need more, you can get it when you need it. What’s next?”

“Lunch.”

“After we eat, we’re going to take down panels until we run out of light. With any kind of luck, maybe we can finish removing them by tomorrow night. Paul, what are you going to do about the holes in your shingles?”

“Patch them, what else? Lift them up enough to add the tar and add some white sand to the tar that comes up through the hole.”

Late the next evening, we had the rest of our 43 panels off the roof. We’d taken the spares the previous day and as we removed the mountings, Paul tarred the holes and added white sand. Taking them down provided the necessary experience to reinstall them and we completed that in 2½ days. Lynn had run the rototiller and shoveled out the soil so we had a trench for the cables. Each panel generated 6 amps at 50 volts and 44 panels generated ~288 amps. We ran one of each color of 4/0 cable and Lynn closed the trench behind us.

We could have gotten by with a slightly smaller cable... but there was always the possibility that the situation turning into a war and our needing additional panels. There was no sense in being penny wise and pound foolish. We were up to the battery stage and we first reengineered the top landing to the basement stairs and added additional timbers to the timber that would hold the winch via a 5/8” x 12” eye bolt and a clevis to hold the hook on the chain hoist.

We first removed the cabling from the 24 batteries, storing it in the pickup. Next, we moved 4 batteries at a time, somehow managing not to break down the trailer with the 2 tons it was hauling. We manage 8 batteries the second day and the final twelve the next day. We deferred connecting the cables until the next day. However, when we completed the PV panels earlier we switched from commercial to sun power and it switched over without a hitch.

“How much longer David?”

“We’ll be done tomorrow morning Lynn. Can you bring me up to speed on the latest news?”

“MSM or the ham bands?”

“Both and in that order.”

“The MSM confirms the first report I gave you on Labor Day. The ham bands suggest that there is more to what happened than meets the eye.”

“Conspiracy theories always claim that there’s something wrong with the official version.”

“Yeah well, we all know that LBJ was behind the Kennedy assassination and that they have flying saucers at hanger 18. It’s nothing like that. Is more on the order of how the US knew to sortie the entire navy and move the airplanes to Edwards and Groom Lake. That suggests they knew of the attack long before it occurred. Moreover, how did they happen to place the ABMs where they would do the most good?”

“If you find out, let me know. Did you keep supper warm or is it leftovers?”

“You can either have grilled cheese and fries or a ham sandwich and macaroni salad.”

“If that will finish the ham and macaroni salad I’ll go that way.”

“Good. We’ll have steak and baked potatoes tomorrow night. They cancelled the Defense Emergency and we’re down to DEFCON 2. We’re receiving a small amount of transpacific fallout of about 20mR/h. Do we need to shelter?”

“No. The normal dose of background radiation per year is about 20mrem. The current level is relatively high but nothing to be concerned about. Although, I must say, it’s higher than what we got from the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake that caused all that damage to the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. They didn’t really have a choice when they closed down all six reactors. We seem to be getting fallout from China and possibly Japan and North Korea.”

“How much will we receive in 120 days? That’s the standard isn’t it?”

“Around 57 Rem. Do you want to sleep in the shelter? It’s not a problem if that’s what you want to do.”

“I do if you don’t mind, that’s why we have it. That spreadsheet talks about maximum doses and doesn’t really deal with cancer causing doses or doses that might induce genetic changes. The twins won’t stay there unless we do.”

“Fair enough. That will keep the annual dose well below 90 Rem and it will continue to fall, slowly.”

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Lynn’s selections from Arrow Tech were fortunate. Not only did she have low range dosimeters, she had low range meters that allowed us to get readings that were outside the range of the CD V-715 meters. Mom, Paul and Alice decided not to shelter since

any accumulated dose they might receive probably wouldn't shorten their lives by much, if any. I'm not so sure that part of Mom and Alice's decisions didn't pertain to the fact that they were beyond reproduction ages.

As much as I hated to admit it, WW III had done a number on the world, as a whole, but the two Superpowers, Russia and the US, had been spared. The US still uses Rad and Rem while most of the remainder of the world had used Gray and Sieverts. To convert the newer units to our units, multiply by 100; ergo, 1 Gray equals 100 Rad. A Rad is radiation absorbed dose which a Rem is radiation equivalent man. There is the Q factor to consider for certain types of radiation, but that doesn't include X-Ray or gamma rays. All of the radiation we were receiving had to be gamma rays due to the lapsed time.

We also let the horses out of the barn, but roped their halters together and took them down to Paul's so they could get a little grass. Because the grass in his pasture was so limited, we used supplemental small bale hay; which was another issue I had with him. When it was obvious that an attack was unlikely and the DEFCON had been lowered to 3, Paul bought two semi loads of small bail hay. With our small ½ acre, all we had room for was a large corral and very little grain storage.

"I bought those two truckloads of hay and lined up two more, just in case."

"I read that story you know."

"What story?"

"Just in Case. It was about a man whose last name was Case and his parents had a sense of humor and they named him Justin."

"Must have missed that one. Anyway, about the grain. I ordered a metal silo to hold COB."

"Do horses eat corn cobs?"

"Damned if I know. I was referring to the mixture of corn, oats and cracked barley that is mixed as horse feed. It's a lot cheaper by the ton than buying 50 or 100 pound bags. The elevator suggested adding 5% soybean meal as a supplement. The metal silo holds about 50 tons and as soon as it's erected, the elevator will fill it."

"We decided to sleep in the shelter for the foreseeable future."

"Kids won't stay if you don't?"

"Exactly. Who makes the grain bins?"

Arizona Black – Chapter 7

“Brock; it’s a division or subsidiary of Agri-Systems. They make an unloader system that will interface with the automatic feeding system. I’m going to have the automatic system extended to fill outdoor livestock feeding tables.”

“And our sleeping in the shelter is ok with you?”

“I’m just sorry I didn’t think of it first. You haven’t received much exposure during the few days we’ve been out and about. I guess I’m just getting old. I’ve been racking my brain trying to determine why Russia and the US didn’t go at it. Hell, we may end up buying oil from them before this is over. If we started on the North Slope right now, it would be quite some time before we saw any more oil from Alaska. And, you know how California is about drilling off their coast.”

“I don’t see how they can stop it if the federal government decides to allow the drilling.”

“They’d sue and try to get an injunction halting federal activity until the courts decided the issue.”

“That’s nuts.”

“What would expect from the land of fruits and nuts?”

“Paul, the President already has the authority to force the issue using existing Executive Orders. Plus if the military is short on fuel, it becomes a National Security issue.”

For the next year, Lynn, the twins and I slept in the shelter. The radiation level continued to fall to the point that our instruments couldn’t record it unless we left dosimeters topside for an extended period. Because the US hadn’t been attacked successfully, the country, as a whole, hadn’t changed. However, there was a gas crunch unlike anything since 1973, according to Paul.

If you’ve seen some those ads they used to run on TV about freight costs, you realized what happened next. Long haul trucking became a thing of the past until fuel supplies could be restored. The beneficiaries of circumstances were the railroad lines. A diesel electric powered train can haul more cargo for less diesel fuel than any other form of transportation. The majority of the old rail lines were still in place, even if the stations had been torn down. A station isn’t needed for freight, only an unloading dock. Limited amounts of fuel were available for local deliveries.

Gasoline climbed to around \$7.60 a gallon right along with diesel and kerosene. Airline ticket prices went through the roof reducing the number of air passengers by two-thirds. People used the limited public transportation, where available, rode a bike or walked to work. Our business at the store fell off sharply and orders came down to start terminating staff based on seniority. At least the company had a sense of loyalty to long term employees, for a while. It only took a matter of weeks to reduce our staff from 8 to

3, including me. Since the bonus was a percentage of profits, pickings looked slim. It made me doubly glad I hadn't gotten that promotion.

Oil wells around the country that had been capped, as being too costly to operate, were reopened and a marginal addition to the crude oil supply became available. Wells were being drilled at breakneck speed in the Gulf of Mexico and off the west coast, further increasing the supply. Russia set the price of crude at \$200 USD per barrel, FAS CAP (Free Alongside – Customer Arranged Pickup), and the politicians embargoed Russian oil. Not only did they have their oil to sell, they beat the US to the Middle East by a huge time margin. Rather than risk a war, the US backed off.

Paul had the empty ½ acre next to ours covered with a layer of manure and hired a local to rototill it for 25 gallons of gasoline. Think about it; when we bought the gas last, it was running \$4 and was now averaging \$7.50. We got off lucky.

There had been a series of earthquakes on the San Andreas Fault in California starting about three months ago. More than half of them were 5.0 on the Richter scale or higher. It was something new to talk about and the MSM was on a roll. Dr. Lucy Jones and/or Kate Hutton were making regular appearances on the various cable news networks and on ABC, CBS and NBC. The most either of them would say was to reiterate that a major slip was expected during the next 20 years.

The expectation, as I understood it, was based on a study made by another member of the USGS in Pasadena which predicted a major quake within 30 years back around 2010. However, both were quick to point out that it was only a prediction, not a certainty. The expected magnitude was between 8.0 and 8.5.

The garden planted during early spring was doing very well and 2 additional 30 quart All American pressure canners and 4 hot water canners were purchased from Canning Pantry along with assorted pickle and tomato sauce mixes. Alice, Mom and Lynn were putting in fairly long days to keep ahead of production. Paul was tending to the horses and, with the wrangler he hired, keeping the barns clean and helping a little with the garden.

I was putting in 10 hour days, six days a week and doing my best to try and turn a profit for my store. The two remaining employees besides me were hourly and I staggered the day shifts to keep two people in the store during weekdays. And, for the same reason, I worked Saturdays alone.

By late summer, the garden was pretty much finished except for digging the potatoes and collecting the squash and pumpkins. The four of them rested for a day or two and then made an inventory of our LTS and regular food supplies. Expedited orders were placed with Walton Feed, Emergency Essentials and Nitro Pak. Paul called the grocery store in Flagstaff and ordered two cases of hams, two cases of bacon and two cases of chickens plus a whole Black Angus beef. Finally, they used the Suburban to pull the trailer down to Phoenix to shop Costco's and Sam's Clubs.

Lynn said when she stopped to refill my supply of cigarettes; she thought her folks were going to wring her neck. She explained that no one place had enough and they had to make several stops. By the time I got home from work, they were back and had everything put away.

“I hadn’t ordered from Emergency Essentials before, but Nitro Pak was out of some things I wanted so I gave Emergency Essentials a shot. Between the two, I did manage to get everything I wanted. You know Walton raised their prices again and when I requested expedited shipping, they balked. I think maybe I should drive up to Montpelier and pick up the order myself.”

“How far is it?”

“Around 735 miles each way.”

“A day up and a day back?”

“My thinking was two days each way. I’ll call Emergency Essentials and switch the order to will call and swing by Canning Pantry since it’s on the way and replace those spice mixes we used up. It would mean a slight detour north on I-15 to US 89. Hyrum and Montpelier are both on US 89. We could hit Orem on the way back.”

“Lynn said it took several stops to find the cigarettes. What about the toilet paper and coffee?”

“Those took several Costco stores. We had to settle for whatever brand of coffee was available. We got luckier on the Sam’s Clubs and only had to stop at two. By the time we get back from the trip, the things I ordered from the store in Flagstaff should be in.”

“Anything we can do?”

“Stay safe.”

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“Your folks left this morning to pick up replacement spices from Canning Pantry plus food from Walton and that Emergency Essentials order.”

“I thought they usually ordered from Nitro Pak.”

“Paul said they were out of some things and Emergency Essentials had them.”

“How long?”

“Two days each way.”

“Darn.”

“What?”

“They had another quake in California earlier today, five point five. Hutton said there some speculation that the cluster of quakes represents precursors. Did you ever see ‘10.5’?”

“That can’t happen. The San Andreas is a lateral slip fault. Besides, there’s no Mid-American Rift. The New Madrid Seismic Zone is relatively small.”

“You didn’t do enough research David. You’re right, there’s no Mid-American Rift; it’s called Midcontinent Rift System. It extends from Canada to Kansas and has two arms, the eastern and western. It’s sort of shaped like an arch. What would happen if it turns out to be involved with the New Madrid Seismic Zone? New Madrid is also a lateral slip fault like the San Andreas.”

“Ten point five?”

“Never say never.”

“I’m going to take Paul and Jordan to the range tomorrow and bring them up to speed on the HK-416s.”

“I’ll join you and work with my Super Match and Tac-50.”

“Sure. I get the magazines loaded now. You’ll want the 178gr A-MAX for your Super Match; what do you want for the Tac-50?”

“Load eight mags of A-MAX and two of Mk 211. Five magazines should be enough for the M1A. Load one with A-MAX and the other four with surplus. Once I verify the rifle is accurately sighted in with the match ammo, I’m going to fire the surplus and compare the results.”

“Got it; I think seven each for the HK-416s. We’ll keep it limited to aimed fire this time and wait for a while until we introduce them to full-auto.”

The ground trembled slightly.

“Did you feel that?”

“What do you think it was?”

“An earthquake. Let’s check the news.”

“I’ll get it.”

... a major earthquake occurred on the San Andreas fault just moments ago. The USGS National Earthquake Information Center in Golden, Colorado stated they would have a preliminary announcement within 15 minutes and a more accurate determination within the hour. There has been recent speculation concerning the ongoing series of larger than normal earthquakes on the San Andreas.

The announcer was handed a piece of paper. He blanched when he read it and took a drink of water from a glass that was under the tabletop. He paused and collected himself.

In addition to the earthquake on the San Andreas Fault, two additional major earthquakes have been reported. The first occurred on the Keweenaw Rift also known as the Midcontinent Rift System and the second occurred on the northern portion of the Reelfoot Rift underlying the New Madrid Seismic Zone.

Such an occurrence of multiple major earthquakes during a single day has never occurred during this reporter’s life. For a nation attempting to recover from the events relating to the worldwide global thermonuclear war, these events could not have come at a worse time. As most of you are probably aware, any structures damaged but not collapsed by the initial earthquake are frequently destroyed by the aftershocks.

It looked to be a long evening and Lynn started a fresh pot of coffee dripping. I listened to the announcer as he filled the wait time with various bits of national news. It included information on the progress on the North Slope, the California Coast and the Gulf of Mexico. It occurred to me that the earthquake on the San Andreas Fault might affect the progress he reported for California.

“Did he announce it yet?”

“No he didn’t. He’s been filling in with bits of national news relating to additional efforts drilling for crude oil. I think with the California earthquake, his news may be dated.”

Preliminary readings for the three earthquakes are Moment Magnitude of 8.7 and a Mercalli intensity of XI for the San Andreas quake; Moment Magnitude of 8.3 and a Mercalli intensity of XI for the New Madrid quake; and, Moment of Magnitude of 9.0 and a Mercalli intensity of XII for the quake on the Midcontinent Rift near Duluth Minnesota.

The chief scientist at the NEIC stated that the initial readings would be modified as additional records are reviewed and local reports on the extent of damage are received. We expect that information within 45 minutes. We’ll take a break for a commercial announcement.

“Wow, it sounds like 10.5.”

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10.5

The beginning of the film shows a biker riding through the Seattle area when he realizes that a large earthquake is underway. Meanwhile, Dr. Samantha Hill is awoken by an earthquake. At the Earthquake Center, the magnitude of the earthquake is being recorded. The scene returns to the biker stopped under the Space Needle, a landmark whose legs succumb to elongating cracks. The biker speeds away to escape its collapse, but dust and shadow engulf the biker, his fate unknown.

The quake is measured as 7.9 at the Earthquake Center. Dr. Hill goes to the Center, taking command and displacing the dismayed Dr. Jordan Fisher. Another quake occurs, which is initially thought to be an aftershock, but it is larger in magnitude than the original quake. Dr. Hill's Hidden Fault Theory is then explained.

In a basketball game between President Paul Hollister and Roy Nolan, President Hollister foreshadows that when Nolan is in a desperate position in the game he takes the long shot. The president's aide, Sean Morris, enters the gym and informs the president of the situation. At a local hospital Dr. Zach Nolan, Roy Nolan's son, and Dr. Owen Hunter are performing surgery. Nolan shortcuts his way through the surgery, risking the patient's life but saving him some scar tissue and a pint of blood. Hunter complains about Nolan's refusing help.

An 8.4 earthquake opens a fault which engulfs an entire train near Redding, California. As a result, Governor Carla Williams, who had just seen her daughter and her ex-husband off on a camping trip, agrees to help the Governor of Washington.

Following yet more earthquakes and per the President's instructions, Roy Nolan constructs a task force of the best geologists and seismologists. The team includes Dr. Fisher and Dr. Hill. Dr. Hill mentions her Hidden Fault theory, which is received skeptically. When Nolan starts to realize that Hill might be right, she is given permission to prove her theory. She and Dr. Fisher visit a lake, where they see some dead animals with no visible cause of death until Dr. Hill realizes that they have died from carbon monoxide poisoning. The two sprint back to the car to get gas masks, but Dr. Fisher passes out. Hill frantically searches and eventually finds the masks, putting them on both herself and Fisher.

Back at the Task Force Center, Dr. Hill predicts that the next quake will be in San Francisco. When she brings the proof and prediction to Nolan, he deems it too risky to evacuate the entirety of San Francisco. However, when San Francisco is destroyed by a 9.2 earthquake, vindicating Dr. Hill, Nolan remorsefully contacts the President, doubtful of his own ability to handle the job. Also in San Francisco were Governor Williams and her assistant Rachel.

At long last Amanda Williams and her father Clark Williams arrive at Browning, where everything is covered in a thick red haze. Clark and Amanda, despite Amanda's asthma, emerge from the car and descend into the pit that used to be Browning, curious after they hear country music coming from it. Clark digs until he finds the source of the music: a car with a dead family in it. They drive back, trying to get home, but they get trapped in quicksand. Amanda and her father Clark narrowly escape.

Dr. Hill hypothesizes that they could "weld" the fault shut by letting it experience immense heat – the only way she knows how is to do this is by way of nuclear bombs. This is the end of the first half of the series, in which we see what all the characters are doing.

At the start of the second half, Nolan and others are preparing to install the first of six nuclear bombs at correct depths to "seal" the fault. The first five go smoothly, but during the installment of the sixth an earthquake occurs, and they lose a warhead. Nolan asks if he can set it manually and the answer is yes. Nolan goes down to do it, but is pinned by the warhead when an aftershock hits. He calls the president to say he failed, and the President urges him to "make the long shot". Nolan replies "Not this time, buddy, not this time". He then calls his son to say that he is sorry for being so distant and that he loves him. Zach Nolan, meanwhile, is at the refugee camp, "Tent City" in Barstow, California.

The Williams find a truck carrying survivors, and they are also transported to Tent City. In a wounded San Francisco, Carla Williams and Rachel are trapped under a wall. Rachel admits that she and her husband Jim had a horrible fight. She asks Carla to tell Jim that Rachel loves him and wants to have a family with him. The two women are found a few minutes later. Carla wakes up in a hospital in Nevada and discovers that Rachel has died.

Deciding that nothing can be done about the lost sixth warhead, Dr. Hill decides to continue with the fault welding plan and detonate the first five nukes. At the last second, the sixth is activated by Nolan who manages to reach the control panel just in time. Now all six nukes have been detonated and Nolan is incinerated.

It seems to work, until Dr. Hill, concerned about southern California, observes a river flowing backwards, draining into the open fault. The last nuke wasn't deep enough when it exploded leaving southern California still in danger. Shortly after, a massive earthquake occurs. It climbs higher on the Richter Scale, with Sean Morris narrating events to the president and the audience. Suddenly a massive crack appears at a beach near Venice, runs through Los Angeles, collapses the downtown skyline, destroys the Hollywood sign, and continues inland with the ocean pouring inside. Eventually the crack reaches Tent City and its peak of 10.5. Clark and Amanda run away from the rushing water. Dr. Hill and Dr. Fisher run amid the panic, until a tower falls on Dr. Fisher, injuring his leg. Owen Hunter joins his family and they escape. Zach Nolan rescues a little girl. When Fisher collapses, the crumbling ground stops short of their feet. They stand up to see that the southwestern coast of California has been cut

away and a new island was formed. The last scene focuses on what is left of the evacuation centers and zooms out to a view from space in which the California coast and the island are distinctly separated. The movie ends with the president speaking about how this disaster was a wake-up call to the world that humans are not the masters of this planet.

10.5: Apocalypse (sequel)

A magnitude 10.5 earthquake destroys Los Angeles and triggers a massive tsunami which causes massive damage to Waikiki, Hawai'i. It turns out to be only the first of a series of seismic events, including the awakening of extinct volcanoes, sudden instability of aquifers, and awakening of ancient faults. Hoover Dam collapses when Lake Mead starts to heat up and expand beyond the spillway's capacity. Las Vegas collapses into a giant sinkhole when the acidic water undermines underground limestone, creating a massive sinkhole. The worst of the seismic events is a massive fault which has opened up under South Dakota, destroying Mount Rushmore in the process.

The geologists at the United States Geological Survey don't understand why seismic events which usually take centuries or longer would be happening so rapidly, but Dr. Samantha Hill remembers that her father had once theorized that the earth's tectonic plates would reach a point of maximum separation, at which point they would reverse direction. The theory also states that related seismic activity would be vastly accelerated during the initial period of reversal. However, Dr. Earl Hill had been ostracized by the USGS for that theory, and had abandoned geology to become a successful professional poker player. When Las Vegas sinks into the ground, he is caught in the casino of the (fictional) Atlas Hotel.

The second part of the miniseries begins with Dr. Hill's rescue from the ruins of the Atlas Hotel just before it is swallowed up completely. At the same time, the fault line is running north and south from South Dakota. If it reaches Houston and the Gulf of Mexico, as predicted, the Midwestern plains will be covered by a new ocean, just as they were thousands of years ago. A massive evacuation of the region is ordered. However, the (fictional) nuclear plant in Red Plains, Texas, is right in the fault's path. If it is destroyed, the entire area and hundreds of miles around will be contaminated by nuclear waste.

Dr. Earl Hill comes up with a desperate plan to divert the fault around the nuclear plant by opening up a secondary fault running east, by a controlled demolition which explosively ignites the massive natural gas reserves in the area. The main fault follows the new path around Red Plains, saving the nuclear plant. However, nothing can stop the fault altogether. Once again it turns south, slicing through the middle of Houston to reach the Gulf of Mexico. At the same time, the northern half of the fault has reached Hudson Bay. When the waters rush into the fault, they create a new ocean which splits the United States and Canada in half.

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“I didn’t know you copied that to your computer.”

“At the time, it seemed like such a remote possibility. Now, I’m not so sure. If a person were to assume for a moment that the Midcontinent Rift System and the Reelfoot Rift somehow managed to link up and that Dr. Earl Hill’s theory was correct, we might end up with a much wider Mississippi River.”

“An inland sea?”

“Oh, I doubt that. But... with three earthquakes of this magnitude, who knows?”

“But some of the faults involved are slip faults. The northern end of the Midcontinent Rift System lies below Lake Superior.”

“Good ol’ Gitche Gumee; imagine the possibilities.”

“Do you want to spend the night in the shelter?”

“The kids and your mother are already asleep. Just make sure the NWS radios are turned on.”

It is claimed that people traveling in a moving vehicle are sometimes unaware of small earthquakes. When the magnitude is high enough, they sometimes have problems controlling their vehicle. To my way of thinking, it’s like experiencing a blown tire at high speed. The best way to control that situation is to take your foot off the gas pedal and keep it off the brake pedal. The engine will slow your vehicle for you, but you’ll have to replace the blowout. Just about then, the phone rang and it was Paul.

“David, we’re in Salt Lake City. The local radios announcers are talking about a series of massive earthquakes. Any thoughts on what we should do?”

“Did you feel any of the quakes in Salt Lake?”

“No.”

“Lynn and I were just discussing the 10.5 miniseries. I think you might be ok to continue early in the morning. If I may make a suggestion, leave early and be in Hyrum when Canning Pantry opens. That won’t take long and you might get to Montpelier early enough to pick up the stuff you ordered. You could drive back down to close to Salt Lake City and leave early the next morning to arrive in Orem around the time they open.”

“That sounds like plan. Do you think it might be wise to drive straight though to get back to Bridgeport?”

“That would depend on if you two are up to it. If you are, I would.”

“Any problems there?”

“Not at the moment. We felt the earthquake on the San Andreas. It wasn’t much this far east.”

“Call you tomorrow night. Bye.”

“Goodbye Paul.”

I repeated the essence of the conversation to Lynn and we called it a night. One nagging thought passed through my mind several times as I drifted off to sleep. “In 10.5, Cascadia must have subducted to cause the earthquake in Seattle. Is that next?”

Cascadia subducted overnight. However it had no local effect for Cottonwood or Bridgeport Arizona and our SAME radio didn’t interrupt our sleep. I started the coffee and turned on the local news. Seattle had been hit hard and more than the Space Needle collapsed. Seattle had experienced a building boom in the latter 20th and early 21st century and was dotted with skyscrapers.

Even more interesting was the ‘Underground City’. Seattle’s first buildings were wooden. In 1889, a cabinetmaker accidentally overturned and ignited a glue pot. An attempt to extinguish it with water spread the burning grease-based glue. The fire chief was out of town, and although the volunteer fire department responded they made the mistake of trying to use too many hoses at once. They never recovered from the subsequent drop in water pressure, and the Great Seattle Fire destroyed 25 city blocks.

While a destructive fire was not unusual for the time, the response of the city leaders was. Instead of rebuilding the city as it was before, they made two strategic decisions: that all new buildings must be of stone or brick, insurance against a similar disaster in the future; and to regrade the streets one to two stories higher than the original street grade. Pioneer Square had originally been built mostly on filled-in tidelands and, as a consequence, it often flooded. The new street level also assisted in ensuring that gravity-assisted flush toilets that funneled into Elliot Bay did not back up at high tide.

Since many of the new masonry structures had been completed, the main level was now the second level of those structures and the former first story was now the basement. Lynn and I took the guided tour so I could see the ‘Underground City’. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being most interesting, I’d have to rate it as a 6. So much of Seattle was built on landfill and landfill means liquefaction. All of the high rise building including the Space Needle came down.

There were 24 buildings in Seattle taller than 400’ and 19 of the 20 tallest buildings in Washington are located in Seattle. Uh... make that past tense. When Cascadia

subducted, the buildings came down and when the tsunami hit Seattle, a lot of Seattle ended up in Puget Sound. The tsunami came right down the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

Arizona Black – Chapter 8

That evening Paul called from Orem.

“David we pushed on to Orem and got a motel. In addition to our order, we’re going to add several items until we run out of space. I think we should be able to get a good night’s sleep and drive through once we’re loaded. If we have to stop, one of us will call.”

“Did you hear about Cascadia?”

“Yes, every station in the area is carrying coverage. I stopped and filled the tanks when we arrived and we have enough fuel to make it home, not counting the 6 5-gallon cans. Hang on, Alice want to speak to Lynn.”

“Hi mom, are you ok?”

“We thought about it but the kids and June were asleep so we didn’t bother. Yes, we can wait up until you arrive. No, no one has mentioned Yellowstone, Long Valley or Valles Grande.

“Ok, we’ll see you sometime tomorrow. Goodnight.”

“Well, she said that they’re tired but got a lot accomplished today. Daddy doesn’t think it will take over 12 hours from Orem to Bridgeport.”

“She briefly mentioned getting to Costco and filling in loose ends. Daddy has meat on order in Flagstaff, doesn’t he?”

“Yes, 2 cases of hams, 2 of bacon and 2 of chickens plus a whole beef.”

“Why don’t you take Paul with you and pick that up? I’ll take Jordon with me and go to Costco in Prescott.”

“Ok. I’ll pick up a 4th Igloo 250 Big White and take the 105. Anything else?”

“Get all the .45 Colt cowboy loads you can find. I have a feeling that we just might need them to teach Paul and Jordan how to shoot the Colts.”

We left around 9am the next morning, Lynn headed one way and I headed the other. I got the 4th cooler first. Eleven hundred five quarts are equal to 37ft³. Paul’s meat order was in and cut up and wrapped so a bagger I loaded it into the coolers. I had to write a

check, the order exceeded my daily debit card limit. I stopped by a tobacco shop and added to our smokes, adding additional menthol cigarettes and got Paul a box of Churchill rejects. Finally, we stopped at the store where Paul and I usually bought ammo and I picked 4 cases of Winchester .45 Colt cowboy loads (500 rounds per case) and anything that caught my fancy.

Paul and I pulled through one of those quick lube places and got the pickup serviced. Finally, I topped off the tanks and headed home. Once home, we split the beef between Paul's freezer and ours. Each got a case of hams, bacon and chickens. By the time Lynn and Jordan arrived, the hams were in the freezer and the chickens shrink wrapped and in the freezers with the hams.

We let the twins move our half of the toilet paper, paper towels and light stuff while Lynn and I put our half on our storage shelves. Mom stayed with the kids while we did the same at Paul and Alice's and put their chickens in the freezer. I did the hams and bacon when we transferred the beef.

Paul and Alice arrived home about 8:30pm. I quickly filled him about picking his meat order up and Lynn's trip to Prescott. Then, I inquired about his trip.

"No problem getting to Salt Lake City, but it was a long drive. We made Hyrum around the time they opened and once I found the place, it was smooth sailing. I called ahead to Walton and told them we'd be there in a couple of hours to pick up that order. They loaded it in the trailer while I paid. They must have a lot of people picking up their own orders, there was line. I had to pay Idaho sales tax, too. I extended the day somewhat and drove down to Orem. After we called, we went to bed because we were both getting tired.

"It was basically the same at Emergency Essentials except what wouldn't fit in the trailer went into the back of the Suburban. We ran the truck through a Jiffy lube and topped off our tanks. We had a bit of a load because of all those super pails, but we made fairly good time. I was only off about a half hour on what I estimated our arrival time. By the way, thanks for picking up the meat. How much do I owe you?"

I handed him the receipt from the grocery store and he counted out half of the total. Lynn made tea for the ladies and Paul and I went down to the basement for a nightcap. He mentioned that both Walton and Emergency Essentials indicated they had to cut-off orders. Apparently EE had at least three locations, a retail store, a warehouse and company offices. He said he appreciated the cigars. After we finished our drinks, they collected Mom and the three of them headed over to their place.

We watched late news and they were reporting the final data on the earthquakes. Final readings for the three earthquakes are Moment Magnitude of 8.9 and a Mercalli intensity of XII for the San Andreas quake; Moment Magnitude of 8.7 and a Mercalli intensity of XII for the New Madrid quake; Moment of Magnitude of 9.1 and a Mercalli intensity of XII for the Midcontinent Rift quake with the Seattle quake rated Moment

Magnitude 9.0 with a Mercalli intensity of XII. The preliminary damage estimate was a combined \$35 billion. The Mercalli intensities were based on the overall effects each of the four earthquakes.

The estimated death toll was projected to be in the tens of thousands overall. The initial problem was an inadequate number of rescue personnel around the country to deal with such a massive combined disaster. She then turned to a brief discussion of the various service interruptions include phone, water, sewage and natural gas. Locales where power was produced probably wouldn't notice much interruption and she mentioned Arizona by name. Arizona generated power at Palo Verde and in Holbrook and Holbrook had an inordinately large coal reserve on hand.

With the PV panels and batteries, I wasn't overly concerned. Between Paul and Alice and Lynn and me, we probably had a lifetime supply of propane. If we only ran the generator to recharge the batteries, the same applied to our diesel supplies. Just to make sure, he and I agreed to top off all the tanks the next day. We also agreed that we wouldn't need much diesel, gasoline and propane. I kept 4 55-gallon drums of kerosene for the lamps and the portable heater and needed about 200-gallons more. He said they didn't need that much and suggested that I get a 4 more drums.

Paul and Alice had been prepping for years and instead of the cheap imported oil lamps had quality American made lamps and Dietz lanterns. They bought wicks by the roll. Lynn and I had replaced the burners on our imported lamps with the American burners and also bought several rolls of lamp and lantern wicks. It gave us protection three layers deep in case we didn't have power, the PV panels and batteries, the generator and the old fashioned solution. It was the age old prepper question; would you rather have it and not need it or need it and not have it.

I took some additional time off to follow the reporting of this set of disasters on the media. When they weren't covering the disasters, they managed to get in a little national and international news. The one item I found most pleasing was the report that the last of the foreign ambassadors and UN ambassadors had either returned to their homelands or another country that would accept them. The only delegations not leaving were Russia, Germany, Brazil, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia.

Russia must have opened the Middle Eastern oil fields and had them in nearly full production. They offered the US oil for \$100 a barrel and the US apparently countered with \$50. They split the difference and while the terms were the same, FAS CAP, we had our oil. The Russian insisted on payment in gold. Brazil had taken over the Venezuelan oil fields. Although the primary fuel used in Brazil was ethanol based, they still needed some petroleum products.

We still had a problem with petroleum products because the earthquakes had destroyed several refineries. Those in the lower Midwest and along the Gulf coast were still operating while those along the west coast were toast. We could afford to wait for the fuel to become available beyond topping off our tanks. Paul and Alice followed the

delivery trucks over and paid for our propane, gasoline, diesel and kerosene including the additional drums.

“Mom didn’t come with you?”

“She said she had a migraine and had taken some medication. She went back to bed.”

“That’s strange; I’ve never known her to have a migraine before.”

“Do you want to go check on her? She seemed a little spacey to me.”

“Yes, if you wouldn’t mind.”

“I’ll ride along, just in case. Let’s take the Suburban.”

In retrospect, I hate to say this but their home was a quiet as a tomb. I went to check on Mom and immediately saw something was wrong. She didn’t have a pulse and wasn’t breathing. I started CPR and Paul called for an ambulance. By the time it arrived, she still wasn’t breathing on her own and her heart hadn’t restarted. I explained what we’d discovered and one attendant started using a breathing bag while the other used the defibrillator. The guy that zapped her said he didn’t think she would make it, but they’d transport anyway. She was pronounced DOA at the hospital. The doctor said they’d have to order an autopsy but he expected she’d probably had a stroke.

Meanwhile, Paul called Alice on her cell phone and filled her in. He said she’d explain to Lynn. I won’t say Mom had been the picture of health, but once she’d started came out of the depression, everything seemed to be ok.

Have you ever watched the movie M*A*S*H?

*Through early morning fog I see
visions of the things to be
the pains that are withheld for me
I realize and I can see...*

[REFRAIN]:
*that suicide is painless
It brings on many changes
and I can take or leave it if I please.
I try to find a way to make
all our little joys relate
without that ever-present hate
but now I know that it's too late, and...*

[REFRAIN]

*The game of life is hard to play
I'm gonna lose it anyway
The losing card I'll someday lay
so this is all I have to say.*

[REFRAIN]

*The only way to win is cheat
And lay it down before I'm beat
and to another give my seat
for that's the only painless feat.*

[REFRAIN]

*The sword of time will pierce our skins
It doesn't hurt when it begins
But as it works its way on in
The pain grows stronger...watch it grin, but...*

[REFRAIN]

*A brave man once requested me
to answer questions that are key
is it to be or not to be
and I replied 'oh why ask me?'*

[REFRAIN]

*'Cause suicide is painless
it brings on many changes
and I can take or leave it if I please.
...and you can do the same thing if you please.*

The final autopsy result was an intentional drug overdose using oxycodone tablets washed down with ethanol. The combination is synergistic, ergo, $1+1=10$. They concluded that she had taken the medication well before Paul and Alice had left to come over to our place. They suggested that the latest set of disasters had simply been more than she could bear. Her SSRI, Zoloft, was prohibited for persons under age 18 due to an increased suicide risk. For adults, it produced better results than Prozac. The doctor concluded with the comment that while Zoloft was effective, it wasn't a sure suicide preventative.

We go a plot in the local cemetery and laid her to rest when the coroner released her body. Graveside services were attended by the Minister and the six of us.

*Ah, look at all the lonely people
Ah, look at all the lonely people*

*Eleanor Rigby, picks up the rice
In the church where a wedding has been
Lives in a dream*

*Waits at the window, wearing the face
That she keeps in a jar by the door
Who is it for?*

*All the lonely people
Where do they all come from?
All the lonely people
Where do they all belong?*

*Father McKenzie, writing the words
of a sermon that no one will hear
No one comes near*

*Look at him working, darning his socks
In the night when there's nobody there
What does he care?*

*All the lonely people
Where do they all come from?
All the lonely people
Where do they all belong?*

*Ah, look at all the lonely people
Ah, look at all the lonely people*

*Eleanor Rigby, died in the church
And was buried along with her name
Nobody came*

*Father McKenzie, wiping the dirt
From his hands as he walks from the grave
No one was saved*

*All the lonely people
(Ah, look at all the lonely people)
Where do they all come from?
All the lonely people
(Ah, look at all the lonely people)
Where do they all belong?*

The Beatles - Eleanor Rigby

I suspect the Coroner probably hit the nail on the head. Mom wasn't coping well with world gone mad, despite none of the weapons aimed at the US making past our missile shield. But, life goes on and a person does what he/she must. When you can't cope, you stop trying. Maybe the earthquake was the straw that broke her resolve and she quit caring. At least she was spared what followed.

Cascadia, according to reports, had subducted the entire locked portion of the zone and Seattle crumpled. The moderate aftershocks were enough, however, to topple the remaining buildings.

+++++

Between the fuel shortages and the numerous seismic events, people began to get worried and many tried to become latter day peppers'. That would have been hard enough during 'normal' times and these weren't 'normal' times by a long shot. Frustration grew over the lack of food supplies and other things that people wanted to acquire and set aside, just in case.

The frustration grew to unrest which became agitation and eventually violence. After a few shootings, the government reacted in predictable fashion and enacted a new assault weapons ban that was far more reaching than the Clinton ban of 1994. Magazine fed semi-auto firearms of all kinds were outlawed. All firearms exceeding .460 caliber were also declared illegal. Title II weapons were limited to military and Law Enforcement only and the BATFE went down its list of firearms on the NFR and began to collect the weapons.

Afraid that the Supreme Court might declare the new law unconstitutional, the law provided for a redemption price for each firearm, the original wholesale value. So, your \$20,000 Tommy gun was worth about \$125.

Before you jump to conclusions and expect we were on the verge of a real life '10.5', it hadn't happened, yet. Which is not to say it actually looked like it just might happen; what we did experience was multiple eruptions along the Cascade Range. And, despite increased seismic activity at Yellowstone and Long Valley, neither erupted.

+++++

On the other hand, a sizeable portion of our ABMs had been used during the first missile attack and the word on the street was that it would take up to 2 years, possibly more, to restore our ABM fleet to the full complement we had before the attack. Additionally, the ABMs had only been partial fielded and full fielding was expected to take up to 7 years.

Speaking of Tommy Guns, Auto Ordnance was producing the model 1928A1 full auto version in limited numbers for Law Enforcement and the military. That model would accept both drums and stick magazines and included the optional Cutts Compensator. They went for a lot less than the remaining original Thompsons but were few and far between. Imagine our surprise when Paul was able to acquire 6 additional NIB Model 1928A1s with a full case of the 30-round stick magazines from the same source that sold him the H&Ks. After function testing them, the dealer insisted that Paul limit the ammo to the 230gr ball.

We had some commercial 230gr Speer Lawman FMJ, but not nearly enough. When I raised the issue with Paul, he just shook his head.

“Any weapon without ammo is just a lousy club. I have 30,000 rounds of surplus coming in a few days. Now let me ask you a question David. Did you get the extra food from Costco and Sam’s Club?”

“Yes sir. We got everything on the lists and a few extra items; some for personal use and some for trade goods. We added extra feminine hygiene supplies for trade goods, bath tissue, Kleenex, coffee, salt, sugar and canned meats including Spam, tuna, chicken, ham and beef. We bought all of the hybrid garden seeds we could find. I also added tobacco products because they’ll be hard to get after any event.

“Despite what’s happened or not happened up to now, I have a sneaking suspicion that we haven’t seen an end to our troubles. And I don’t have a clue what might be next. The climate problem was beyond our control. So far, none of the earthquakes or eruptions had any serious effect on our situation here in Bridgeport; excluding the oil and fuel shortage, of course.”

“TOM claims bad things happen in threes. Since we weren’t directly affected by the war, it’s fair to lump it with the resulting climate changes. We also have the ongoing problem with the volcanoes and earthquakes and the oil shortage. So, we’ve had our three Paul.”

“He didn’t say they stopped at three David, only that they happened in threes. One more will make four and they’re exponential, not arithmetic. If he’s right and if we have a fourth, we can expect five more.”

“Thank God you had enough PV panels and batteries to keep us in power. We should have a lot of diesel left and enough propane for years.”

“Still think I sunk too much money into our retirement home?”

“Yes. On the other hand, I’m sure glad you did. I’ve been counting up the disasters in my head Paul. I keep coming up with 5, not 3. The climate problems, the nuclear exchanges, the seismic problems, the oil shortage and the push by the administration to disarm the American public make five, not three.”

“David, we had climate problems before the war so any climate changes resulting from the war are separate. That makes the total 6, not 5.”

“Good. That means we only have to worry about 3 more rather than 4.”

“Have you been to the range lately?”

“Not since we took Jordan and Paul.”

“How about we do that tomorrow after breakfast?”

“I’m game; I could use more practice with my Super Match and Tac-50. Mel will have to choose what she wants to work on but I think we’ll let the twins work with HK-416s again.”

“How’d they do the first time?”

“Pretty good, actually.”

“I think Alice and I might try our Barrett’s and M-21s. We may run a few magazines through our pistols while we’re at it.”

“Are we expecting trouble?”

“Not really. It never hurts to refresh your skills. By the way, we put in a singlewide for our wrangler and his family. He doesn’t do enough to justify the raise he asked for so I counteroffered by offering housing and a share of the meat and produce. He jumped on it, especially since he knew about our shelter. I need to watch my mouth more. I let it slip that we were prepared for ‘any eventuality.’”

“Do you trust him to not spread it around?”

“Yes. I slipped not long after I hired him and he never said a word about it, I’m certain. He didn’t bring it up when he asked about the raise either. It was only after I counteroffered and he accepted that he mentioned knowing about our shelter. I judge him to be a man of principle.”

“How well is he setup for dealing with the MZBs?”

“He has a model ’92 in .44-40 from the 1930s and a 5½” Colt in the same caliber from about the same time period. Told me they belonged to his grandfather. Both are well cared for other than showing some holster and scabbard wear on the bluing. He’s a pretty fair shot.”

“You said family?”

“He has a wife, one son and one child on the way. All things considered, I’m comfortable having them around; more so since his family is living on the acreage. He won’t be running home to protect them because they’re at our place instead of in an apartment in Cottonwood.”

“You realize that you probably gave him a larger raise than he was asking for.”

“Obviously; however, it won’t increase our out of pocket any and I think the investment will be well worth it. I need to get to Flagstaff and pick up a couple cases of full power .44-40. I called and he ordered it. It won’t be in for 3 days. I have those two loaded M1As and several M1911s so I can arm him with some better rifles. His boy isn’t old enough and since his wife is about 6 months along, I won’t arm her either for the moment. Later, if she wants a weapon I may go with an M-1 carbine and 9mm pistol.”

“Auto Ordnance?”

“No, it’s surplus; it’s an M-2 that my father brought it back from Korea.”

“The government doesn’t let you keep your firearms.”

“It wasn’t his. It belonged to a squad leader who was killed during the pullback from the Chosin Reservoir. He stuck it in with some of his things and forgot he had it. When he remembered, he was being transported back to San Francisco or San Diego or somewhere. It’s one of my unregistered NFA firearms.”

“Sometimes I wonder about people living in a place like Arizona owning unregistered NFA firearms.”

“The problem was the Hughes Amendment to the FOPA David. After the effective date, you couldn’t register a full auto weapon. The NFA didn’t seem to stop you from acquiring Mk 211.”

“Stolen Mk 211, probably. No it didn’t Paul. I suppose I’m being hypocritical.

“Yes, you probably are been hypocritical, but we’re both happy you have what you have. You will probably end up being altruistic.”

“Unless it affects my family. You may find me to be quite selfish when it comes to the six of us.”

“That’s as it should be. The question now is what we’re going to do about all of our illegal firearms.”

“Keep out the ‘Cowboy’ guns and conceal the remainder?”

Arizona Black – Chapter 9

“Conceal, but where?”

“Considering how much food we have stored, bury the weapons among the food boxes and pails. Or, we could do a Felix.”

“Second basement walls?”

“Yep, Felix ‘the Cat’ Thompson. The dividing wall in my basement is $\frac{3}{4}$ ” drywall covered by $\frac{1}{4}$ ” wood paneling. I did it that way to have a fire stop. It wouldn’t take much to unload one set of shelving and dismantle the shelves. We could erect 2x4 framing and leave enough space for the firearms and ammo and cover it with a layer of paneling. It would only have to be about 8 to 10 inches of space. We could move the door half the distance and repaint.”

“You read too much fiction. That said, it just might work. It will be a lot of work because we won’t want any outsiders involved.”

What we did was slightly different from what I initially envisioned. We bought the 2x4s, paneling and piano hinges. In addition, we bought locking wheel sets for the storage shelves, all of them. The first task was to empty each set of shelving on my side of the basement, add the wheels and reload the set of shelving which was now mobile. Once we had every set of shelving modified, we bolted each row of shelving together so they rolled as a unit. We then locked the wheels excluding the two rows closest to the finished side.

We pushed the second set of shelving back against the third and the individual first row of units against the second. This left us room to work and we first framed in the dead space on both sides of the door. However, 6” piano hinges were installed on one side of the paneling at the top, middle and bottom and the other side left free. Once we had the paneling installed, we moved weapons and ammo and pushed the shelving back in place, locking the row of wheels. It was no problem because the shelving was Safco 48” wide boltless office shelving. Expensive at half the price but oh so easy to use.

“We need new facing for the door frame. They have to be wider to conceal the storage space and we’ll have to cut in the hinges.”

“I’ve never done that, have you?”

“Nope.”

“How about we get the facings and install them. Maybe we can hire a carpenter to install the hinges.”

“We’ll need new outside corner molding too.”

“Right. I have Lynn locate a carpenter and we’ll get what we need in Cottonwood.”

“Good.”

+++++

“Lynn, we’ve done all we can in the basement and what’s left is outside our skill sets. We’re going to the lumberyard to get what we need. Can you try and locate a carpenter?”

“The only one that comes to mind was crucified 2,000 years ago.”

“Not Him; He escaped from His tomb. Just use the Yellow Pages, please.”

“I was teasing.”

“I know. That’s why I responded as I did. We should be back within an hour.”

When we returned with the new facings, stops and corner molding, the carpenter was waiting. He followed us to the basement and asked which of the two doors we wanted modified. We were stuck and pointed to the center door. He opened it, drove out the hinge pins and set the door in the finished side. He then removed the hinge plates and latch plate followed by the old facings.

After he installed the new facings, he asked, “Centered?”

“Yes please.”

He used his tape measure and a template and marked where the new cutouts went. He used a small portable router and wood chisel to cut out the wood and installed the hinges followed by the latch plate. Finally, he hung the door and inserted the pins.

“Anything else?”

“No, thank you. How much do I owe you?”

“One half ounce of gold. That includes the labor.”

“It took you less than an hour!”

“Oh, the labor is only \$75. The rest is for me to keep my mouth shut about the false wall.”

Before I could protest further, Paul handed him a half ounce Eagle. He picked up his tools and left.

“Now see here, that was uncalled for. A bullet would have been much cheaper.”

“Look at this way David, by accepting the gold he became a member of a conspiracy. He won't open his mouth for love nor money.”

I decided to shut up. I did wonder if the carpenter had his own false wall somewhere hiding his illegal firearms. Five weeks later, our scheme was put to the test.

“ATF. Remain where you are and keep your hands in plain sight. We have a search warrant and are looking for several specific firearms.”

“Let me see the warrant. Um, ok, it seems to be in order, help yourselves.”

“Do you have any firearms?”

“Yes, of course, just what you see in those two cabinets.”

“Not those, the NFA weapons you registered and any assault weapons.”

“We sold those when the Ban passed Congress and before the President signed the bill.”

“Do you have Bills of Sale?”

“Nope. The guy's name was Cash, John Cash.”

“You folks move outside to the picnic table and we'll conduct our search.”

“Help yourselves.”

“Jonsey, you cover them.”

“Aww.”

“Just do it.”

“Right. Ok folks, lead the way.”

We set there through lunch and well into the afternoon.

“We're getting hungry and thirsty. Some of us have to use the bathroom.”

“Wait here.”

'Jonsey' checked and said we could go in one at a time to use the bathroom, get a drink and make a sandwich. I went first and after I used the bathroom, grabbed an unopened case of MREs from the pantry along with a six pack of bottled water from the refrigerator, making sure I didn't alarm the person covering me. I used my penknife to open the box of MREs (Sure-Pack) and allowed the others to choose first. Each chose a meal and Alice left for the bathroom.

This continued until we'd all had a turn at the bathroom and had eaten. Of course having eaten and having a bottle of water required second trips to the bathroom. The sun began setting and the yard light came on. We were starting to get cold.

"We're cold."

"One of you can get jackets. Let the girl do it."

"She can't reach everything."

"Either one of the ladies, then."

"Lynn, grab me a pack of smokes and get your Dad a cigar. It looks like we could be here all night. They'll search until they find something and there's nothing to find."

"Sure."

"How long have you been a Jackbooted Thug Jonsey?"

"No conversation."

"What, not long, huh? That why you get the dirty details."

"Just shut your face Mr. Johnstone. Say, are you related?"

"To whom?"

"William W. Johnstone."

"The author? 'Out of the Ashes'?"

"Yeah."

"Nope."

It was 11:35pm when they gave up their search of the house and all the outbuildings.

“Ok Mr. Johnstone, you get a pass for the moment. We can’t find your firearms. John Cash died in 2003 and I don’t believe you. We’ll be back, count on it.”

“Ok Arnold.”

“What’s that supposed to mean? Huh?”

One of his colleagues whispered in his ear.

“Hah, hah, funny. NOT!”

“Yeah, whatever.”

They loaded up and left.

“I screwed up. It’s a good thing they didn’t pat us down.”

“Why?”

“I’m so used to carrying the Warthawg, I have it on.”

“Jeezus H. Buy a Derringer for crying out loud.”

+++++

Buy this, buy that, buy something else.

We ventured down to the basement. The finished side only shown minimal ransacking while the unfinished side would take a week or two to restore it’s to the previous status. They hadn’t found the shelter entrance. The idea of concealing the blast door came from yet another story. It was covered with a cabinet powered from our batteries and a garage door opener activated the motor powering the wheels which moved it sideways. The cabinet was your typical 36” wide office cabinet storing an assortment of goods like first aid supplies, the KIO₃, the low range Geiger counter, duct tape, paracord and so forth.

These guys were idiots. Who ever thought of putting shelving on casters? Why weren’t the cabinets on either side of the bolted together like the rest? And so forth...

Standby for an announcement by the President...

My fellow Americans,

One. There has been resistance in complying with the New Assault weapons Ban. Therefore, anyone found to be not in compliance will be arrested and subject to the

harshest penalties the law allows. Your government is allowing a 30 day amnesty to allow compliance before arrests commence.

Two. With the agreement with Russia concerning the purchase of oil, adequate supplies will begin appearing on the market during the near future. The Russians demanded gold for their oil, and as a result we are requiring all holders of gold and silver to turn it in. We have established an exchange rate on gold at \$300 an ounce and \$6 an ounce on silver. Each county Treasurer will exchange the redeemed metals with a direct deposit to your banking account or federal reserve notes, as appropriate.

Three. We are experiencing major food shortages in several regions around the United States. Pursuant to existing Executive Orders, each family will be limited to a stock of food for each family member not to exceed 30 days.

Four. The previously listed Executive Orders will be firmly enforced. Refusal to comply will be met with all necessary force.

Thank you

“That son-of-a bitch! We manage to find hiding places for our firearms and he turns around and wants to buy our precious metals for a pittance. It will be a cold day in hell. Any ideas?”

“Felix.”

“More false walls?”

“It’s the best I can come up with off the top of my head David unless you want to store it our subbasement.”

“Given the choice, do you have a preference?”

“The subbasement would be the easiest and much faster.”

“Anything else?”

“No? Ok, we’ll start at sunrise.”

+++++

We were up before sunrise and completed the chores when the eastern sky began to glow. Lynn and Alice had breakfast ready and we ate. After a bathroom break, we began loading the food into the vehicles. It turned out to take all day and we stopped for evening chores and finished the last loads before we washed up and set down for supper.

“How much food did you leave out?”

“The thirty day supply the broadcast mentioned. We’ll fill in weekly, as needed. Tomorrow, we’ll move the things we haven’t already secured like the precious metals.”

“But people know about the subbasement David.”

“I had it in mind to use the hay loft. Paul, what do you think?”

“What do I think? Hmm, people would expect precious metals to be under lock and key or hidden somewhere... say under a shelter floor. Few would think to look for them in a pile of hay. Let’s do it. We’ll keep a few pieces out in our personal possession.”

“What about the freezers?”

“Keep out some of the better cuts, hams, bacon, butter and some of the chicken. We will can the rest. We have room in our freezer for some of the frozen food, you two.”

“And our little freezer in the shelter is empty.”

+++++

The PMs were the easy part. Sorting and moving the frozen food took most of the day. Alice and Lynn had to wait until the meat was partial thawed before it could be cut up and canned. They were up all night and were only 1/3 done. Paul and I brought in cases of jars and stacked them along with the recycled Tattler lids and rings. We cut up the thawed meat, keeping different cuts separate.

“Short night.”

“You look exhausted.”

“I am exhausted and Mom is worse. What are you doing?”

“Cutting up the thawed meat. We kept each cut separate and identified. We also brought in several more cases of jars plus the Tattler lids and rings. What can we do to help?”

“Move the cases of canned meat to Daddy’s subbasement.”

“I hope we get this done before the food police show up.”

“Food police?”

“I suspect they’ll use agricultural extension officers.”

“I hate not being armed.”

“Strap on your Colt. I know it’s inconvenient, but given the status quo, what else can we do?”

So, here we were, late in the second decade of the 21st Century wear firearms invented during the 19th Century. It was almost comical. Alice was now nearly as slim as Lynn and she, too, wore a Colt. Both wore jeans and western cut shirts, not blouses. Paul and I continued to haul the canned food after it cooled.

Paul and Alice’s subbasement was accessed through a USS blast door set in the basement wall and covered by a sliding entertainment center. It was similar to our arrangement substituting the entertainment center for the storage cabinet. Theirs was activated by a Universal TV control rather than a garage opener. The outside ramp had, he explained, 12” walls and overhead and a ramp rather than stairs. The blast door from the barn and generator room connected with the ramp, not the shelter. So much for my speculation about the blast door; they had to remove and replace a portion of the ramp wall, not the shelter wall.

Paul and Alice had weapons on the NFR, too. The ATF were looking for them in Seattle and Seattle was in ruins so they slipped under the radar, for now. We held our breath waiting for Arnold to come back. Maybe he had too much on his plate, he didn’t return. After an interminable wait, we pulled our illegal weapons out and spent a day on the range.

Paul and Jordan were becoming fairly proficient with the HK-416s so we switched them to the Browning Hi-Powers. These proved to have a steep learning curve, producing more recoil than they were accustomed to. It was a long slow process before they were comfortable with pistols. The suppressors reduced the recoil, slightly, helping on that score. It was just a shame the suppressors were covered by the NFA. Some European countries made them mandatory but it was difficult to acquire the weapons to mount them on.

+++++

Lynn and I did a physical inventory of our supplies again and updated our laptop. Each time something happened, or appeared to be on the verge of happening, we increased both our STS and LTS. We could go for years living on our LTS and we almost had too many STS because they don’t have the shelf life of the LTS foods. Between Paul and Alice and Lynn and me, we had enough ammo to fight a war or two. We probably had enough diesel fuel to outlast the generator. There were rebuild kits for both the engine and the alternator containing the ‘typical’ supplies to do a complete rebuild.

It’s a good thing, too. The company I worked for filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy. Chapter 7 is Liquidation, not reorganization. The company had simply grown too fast and was up to its eyeballs in debt. The stores were rented, not owned. I got a final check but wasn’t

paid for accumulated vacation or sick leave. And no severance either. I wasn't the only person out of work and we could fall back on our STS, for a while.

"What are going to do now David?"

"I think I'll learn to harvest firewood. Paul said he'd be my first customer."

"Temporarily, ok? And Daddy has to go with you."

"Do really think I need a babysitter?"

"What if you misgauge where a tree will fall? What if you cut into a tree with a hollow center? Take it or leave it and be sure to watch for rattlers."

"Ok, I get the permit tomorrow."

As it turned out, having Paul with me was more important than I realized. Where I had problems distinguishing between softwood and hardwood, Paul readily chose the hardwoods he wanted.

We found both deadfalls and standing deadwood close to Bridgeport. The first 3-4 weeks, we cleared the deadfalls and hauled them back to our place and stacked them. With that out of the way, the trunks were cut to length, split and added to my pickup. This took longer than locating, cutting and transporting the logs.

We then began searching out the stand dead hardwoods and marking them with orange spray paint. This added a time consuming task to the harvest. Because we had to drop the trees before we could accomplish the hauling, cutting and splitting. We took a break and stack the firewood giving us the volume we'd harvested.

"Good enough David, We'll cut up a pine for kindling and be good to go. I checked out your home and it was previously heated with wood and/or coal. Alice and I discussed it and wanted to get you two a wood burning kitchen stove and a wood/coal burning furnace. We also noticed that you don't use the fireplace. Why not?"

"It's clogged up. It could be creosote in the flue. In addition more heat goes up the flue than into the house."

"It may not be that difficult to get working again."

"We had a sweep check it out and he said we need to replace the flue. And then he tried to get me to purchase something with higher efficiency. It was cost prohibitive at the time."

"May I look into it for you?"

“You’re actually asking? Sure, go ahead.”

A man came down from Flagstaff and inspected the fireplace, the chimney and basement. Paul and he had a long conversation and when the guy left, he was all smiles.

“What we’re going to do is clean out the chimney and fireplace and install a high efficiency fireplace insert and replace your kitchen stove with a modern wood burning kitchen stove. In the basement we’ll install a wood/coal burning furnace connected to your existing ducting. He thought the original furnace was probably wood/coal burning because of the coal room and the opening to shovel coal in.

“It’s your choice, of course, but I’d recommend coal with wood as a backup, like we have. Alice and I will pick up the tab, just like always. Rather than Anthracite coal, I suggest Bituminous. I’ll order several tons and pile it at our place after we fill your coal room. We discussed using a stoker and I decided to go with that since you only fill it once a day or less. Get a scoop shovel. Quantity wise, I think I’ll order one car load, about 120 tons. It’s also less expensive and the shipping will be less. Questions?”

“A million? Never mind, Paul, do your thing.”

“Good. On to other things. When we were counting up disasters, we didn’t include the Assault Weapons Ban or the gold and silver recall. We are sitting on eight and only have one to go. Preps wise, Alice and I have enough for double our remaining lifetimes. We’ve agreed the country has experienced 6 disasters, give or take. None of the six has had serious consequences here. This leads me to wonder about the next three. We could continue to be only indirect affected. If I were a betting man, I’d have to say the odds are against that. We have had to deal with transpacific fallout and minor amounts of ash.

“My gut is so bad I’m taking Nexium and Maalox. As I’ve said before, something big is going to happen and I don’t have a clue. Alice and I still have a lot of storage space over the garage and we discussed buying more Mason jars and Tattler lids. Do you have any thoughts on that?”

“More jars and lids? You’re kidding, right?”

“They don’t spoil. Lynn and you have discovered a way to preserve the lids and extra rings. We were thinking of getting a gross of cases of pints and quarts and six dozen cases of jelly jars. We dearly love the blackberry and strawberry preserves. Grape jelly is... well, grape jelly. If you had a good recipe for orange marmalade, I’d be willing to buy a pickup and trailer load of oranges from a grower down in Phoenix.”

“That’s too much. Get a case of fresh oranges and one-half case of lemons. Lynn and Alice can try several recipes and we can decide which we like best. My mother used to

make it and I think the ratio of oranges to lemons is about three to one. She always used pectin to get the right set. And sugar; it contains a lot of sugar.”

Arizona Black – Chapter 10

Paul and Alice bought the jars and lids. She brought the lids and spare rings over for Lynn to preserve. Not long after, the workmen from Flagstaff started on changing over our heat sources from propane to wood/coal, excluding the hot water heater and dryers. A plumbing company delivered and installed a new Bradford White hot water heater, 100 gallons, twice the size of our old heater. We stored the old heater.

A truckload of coal was delivered and dumped next to the coal room door. The furnace installation went in without a hitch and it was forced air rather than convection. Two guys worked over the chimneys for the furnace and fireplace, having a devil of a time on the fireplace chimney. Meanwhile, I used a scoop shovel to transfer the coal from the pile to the coal room and periodically move the coal in the coal room to the sides so I could shovel in more. That crap is heavy and I wasn't really accustomed to shoveling coal. I don't want to hear any crap about 'Big John' or 'Sixteen Tons'.

As with all tasks, eventually the pile was in the coal room. Our coal room was larger the Paul and Alice's so I went over and heaped my pickup box with more coal. This was more than double the previous work. I had to load the coal, drive home, shovel what I could reach from the pickup bed transferring it to the coal room, shovel the remainder from the pickup bed to a pile, sweep out the pickup bed, rearrange the coal room again and shovel the remaining coal into the coal room. I called it quits before the coal room was full.

Their coal pile was dumped out of sight of the casual observer. I asked and Paul said he'd move it with a small garden cart which was just the size to dump through the coal chute. He also had his wrangler, Jack, to help with the task because Jack didn't really have enough work to keep him busy fulltime. Jack, he said was a crack shot with the M1A and reasonable with the M1911A1. His carry guns were the .44-40s.

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“Lynn, nothing seriously affecting us has happened through six disasters. What is it with you parents and their End Times philosophy?”

“What are you referring to David?”

“How about 120 tons of coal? How about switching us back to wood burning stove, furnace and fireplace? How about another 2½ gross of cases of canning jars? How do they afford it?”

“Daddy knows people. He can either buy at wholesale or acquire things that are outside the reach of other people. They didn’t get much of a discount on the lids and rings, but the jars were wholesale. Who can acquire NFA firearms?”

“A class III dealer.”

“Well...”

“Really?”

“Really. They can also buy ammo from distributors at wholesale prices. You don’t really believe they paid a thousand a case for the .50 Hornady do you?”

“If that’s the case why didn’t I get my ammo through him?”

“You were sort of bummed out with what they already did. He probably lied to you about what the surefire suppressor cost, knowing him. Daddy was into Single Action Shooting when it first became a popular sport. Over the years, he acquired a lot of firearms. Many more than he told you about. He’s a flat out gun nut and has some of almost everything. Example, those AC-556Ks? The Mini-14 is not known for accuracy. They’re NIB but not totally original. Straight shooters, right? New heavier barrels and some action and trigger work by his gunsmith. He knows several both in Washington state and other places, like Phoenix. Contacts he made through Single Action Shooting for the most part.”

“It’s a shame I didn’t that about know him when I got the McMillan.”

“Considering what you gave for the MUNS, it worked out about the same. Despite anything you’ve heard the markup on firearms is around 25%, not 40%.”

“How much ammo does he really have?”

“I don’t know. His rule was a minimum of 10,000 rounds for a semi-auto rifle, 5,000 for a pistol or revolver and the same for a shotgun. He only buys Hornady Match or military surplus like the M855A1.”

“World War Seven?”

“At least, maybe more.”

“We’re running out of storage space. What would you think of our putting in a pole barn?”

“I’ll call Daddy and ask his opinion.”

The problem with being the only child of a wealthy individual coupled with being 'Daddy's Little Girl' has an upside too. Need or want something, ask Daddy's 'advice'. The next day someone is leveling a spot and forming up a slab. In the blink of an eye, you end up with a two story steel building. And since your QD 12.5 can only supply limited power, you have second generator, filters, oil and rebuild kits. A person could get used to this.

"Since you're unemployed David, you need to pull the permits and continue harvesting firewood for both our place and your place. It will help offset the cost of the new building. Since I bought 120 tons of Wyoming coal, set a goal of harvesting on the order of 120 cords. Jack doesn't have much to do and he'll help you. It about time I got back some of the cost of that home I bought."

"That's a lot of firewood."

"Yep. Idle hands and all that. Hardwood mostly; ~95% of the harvest. That ½ acre I've been improving? Bought the other 4½ acres that your lot came from. Put it Lynn's name. So, you have 4 acres of pasture for your horses. Jack fertilized and seeded it if you didn't notice."

"I was wondering who bought it."

"Our properties are now contiguous. I like that better and we can pull the fence and merge the pastures after the firewood is cut, split and stacked."

"So, I'm working for you now?"

"Unpaid employee. You're family."

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"You like the new building Lynn?"

"It's nice."

"It is. Why didn't you tell me about the other 4½ acres?"

"What 4½ acres?"

"The other 4½ acres that our lot came from."

"So help me, I'm going to kill him!"

"You didn't know?"

"I suppose he put it in my name?"

“He did. We get to pay him back for some of the cost of the new building, too. Plus harvesting 120 cords of firewood; half for them and half for us.”

“You won’t be doing that alone will you?”

“Jack will be helping.”

“Now would be a good time to pull the permits and mark the standing deadwood. You can see how many deadfalls there might be that are worth harvesting.”

I went for the permit.

Rules for cutting standing dead trees:

1. Dead standing pine or fir that is less than 12 inches in diameter or less than 15 feet tall. (Diameter is measured at 4 and one half feet above the ground and 12 inches in diameter is equal to 37 inches in circumference.)
2. Dead standing Piñon and Juniper is available regardless of size unless obvious wildlife cavities are present or the tree is signed as a wildlife tree.
3. Dead standing aspen that is less than 12 inches in diameter or less than 15 feet tall may be cut from June 1 to September 30.

NO CUTTING OF ANY STANDING OAK, DEAD OR ALIVE

You may take dead & down wood, limbs, old logs, and chunks of wood lying on the ground; however, you may not take any wood that is marked with paint or left in logging decks (stacks of logs, usually at the road side ready to be loaded on a log truck). You may remove wood from piles left behind as waste by road construction or logging operations (these piles are usually of a dome type shape and include logging slash, limbs, tops of trees and unusable larger pieces), but be sure to stack all that you don't use back on the pile.

“The limit with a paid permit is 10 cords per household Paul. It appears to me that they’re reserving standing dead oak for commercial loggers.”

“Ok, just harvest 20 cords of Piñon and Juniper. We’ll have to buy the hardwood. I’ll pull a paid permit for our household. Did get a paid permit?”

“Yes, it was \$5 per cord. An eight foot log with an average diameter of 15” would equal about 10ft³. It would take 13 logs that size to equal a cord. We could get a bit more from a tree by cutting it 18” above the ground and cutting 16” of the stump. I’d just have to see how much clearance my chainsaw gives me and adjust accordingly.”

Coal Vs. Wood Heat

In colder regions of the country, homeowners have an important decision to make with regard to heating in the winter months. With the prices of oil, natural gas and electricity on the rise, people are increasingly looking into alternatives. Two alternatives worth checking out are coal and wood heating. They both have advantages and disadvantages that will figure into the decision about which option is better.

Availability

Coal is not readily available in all locations; it is mainly available in the states where it is mined. In the United States, coal is mined in 26 states, but is produced mainly in the Appalachian, the Interior and the Western Coal Regions. The most coal is mined in the states of Wyoming, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Kentucky and Texas. Wood is more readily available; you can chop your own wood or purchase wood for burning at any hardware store.

Costs

National averages indicate it is cheaper to heat a home with coal than with wood. For example, \$200 spent on coal would provide 75 percent stove efficiency, whereas \$200 spent on wood would typically provide only 60 percent efficiency.

The price of a coal stove can start as low as \$1,300, and installation could cost only about \$500. To use wood to heat a home, an existing fireplace can be used, or one can be installed beginning at about \$5,000. Another option is a wood burning stove, which can cost from \$800 to \$3,000. Having a wood burning stove installed can cost from several hundred to several thousand dollars, depending on the complexity of the installation.

Environmental Impact

Coal is considered a fossil fuel and is not as eco-friendly as wood is. That is, it's a non-renewable energy source; once all the coal on the planet is all used up, it is gone forever. Wood, on the other hand, is a renewable energy source; new trees can be grown. Wood also produces white ash when burned, which is great for gardening. Wood is cleaner to burn than coal, which emits greenhouse gases when burned.

Efficiency

Wood burns more quickly than coal does, so you would have to load a fireplace or wood stove more often. But it also produces more heat; therefore a larger space can be heated with less wood compared to coal. Coal burns more slowly and so has a longer burn time, making it a more efficient heat source than wood.

Maintenance

Coal requires labor in that ashes must be cleaned out regularly and the soot must be removed from fire tubes and heat exchange surfaces. The sulfur and fly ash produced by coal can corrode metal pipes, so a technician should service a coal stove once a year. Wood heating sources also require maintenance; the chimney must be swept yearly. Wood heating requires additional labor if people prefer to chop their own logs. Wood stoves and fireplaces, along with the glass doors, also need to be cleaned regularly.

Jack and I harvested either deadfalls or standing deadwood; Piñon and Juniper, only. When we used up the 80 ¼ cord load tags, we submitted the completed paperwork to the National Forest office in Flagstaff.

Meanwhile, Paul found a commercial logger who sold firewood and negotiated for 150 cords of Oak logs, delivered to our place. Since the logger didn't have to cut, split or stack the logs, Paul got by cheap. Was that the secret to their wealth? Was Paul a closet cheapskate? He also bought a second train carload of Wyoming coal, putting us at roughly 240 tons. It was enough to fuel a coal fueled electrical generation station for days if not weeks.

Also, while Jack and I harvested the softwood, Lynn and Alice moved every last canning jar and lid from our basement and from the Paul and Alice's place to the second floor of the storage building. We probably had an inventory as large as Canning pantry. After Jack and I had the softwood split and sorted, I hauled our ten cords into the storage building while he hauled Paul and Alice's ten cords to their place.

Before we started to cut, split and stack the 150 cords of hardwood, we took down the fence between the pastures. I drove up to Flagstaff and bought more engine and chain oil and two new chains. It was faster to change a chain than sharpened them and the store in Flagstaff had a sharpening service so I dropped off my dull chain and took the two new chains.

Cutting that oak was something else. I cut and Jack split the wood; first with the splitter and next with a single bit. He had that little twist down pat and nearly every swing popped another piece off the larger split pieces. We got Jordan and Paul involved carrying the pieces and dumping them in my pickup. Seventy-five cords of hardwood was 9,600ft³ and it would nearly finish filling the first floor of our 50x30 storage building. I know it had 12,720FT³ per floor but, 85 cords is almost 11,000ft³.

"Mom taught me her bread baking secrets. Let me know what you think."

"I think my back hurts. We're going to be at this until it gets too cold out and right back on it when it warms back up."

"Would you rather..."

"I'm not sure at the moment. If we needed it and didn't have it, we could burn more coal."

"It's a woodstove."

"We could burn the softwood."

"How large are these logs?"

"Big. Go look sometime. Each 8' log is close to half a cord. They're 3' in diameter and I have to work around them since my chainsaw only has a 36" bar. We have to hoist them to get them into the splitter."

"You're telling me that they're bigger in diameter than the sections are long?"

"More than double; 16" long versus 36" in diameter. It's Arizona White Oak."

"Are they all that big?"

"Thank Heavens no. We started with the largest because it would yield the most cubic feet. If I've correctly identified the pieces of that tree, it must go 64 feet. It probably has close to three cords, not counting the branches. We only got the largest of the branches so call it four plus cords for the one tree."

"That's almost 3% of the wood he bought."

"Right. That has to be the hardest and most dense wood I've ever dealt with. We have to split each section in quarters before we get it in the splitter. Paul and Jordan are little troopers. He lets her take the smaller split pieces and he takes the larger. Say, when did you start letting the two of them carry their Single-Sixes?"

"Daddy and I got them all checked out on the revolvers while Jack and you were harvesting firewood. They have the Long Rifle cylinders, not the Winchester Magnum Rimfire. Their 9422s in .22LR are also in the upstairs gun case. It came to mind when I remember what you went through when that rattlesnake bit you."

"Don't remind me, it was a very bad experience. They don't go out at night without flashlights. And, they only go out at night if it's pressing."

"They not babies anymore David."

"Yes, I know, twelve on their next birthdays."

"Daddy had an upper GI."

"A what?"

“An esophagogastroduodenoscopy.”

“Oh yeah, that makes it clearer. Try English.”

“An endoscopic examination of his upper GI tract.”

“Ulcers?”

“To spare. Esophageal, stomach and duodenal. The stomach ulcers are bleeding. The doctor put him on Carafate and Prevacid. They did a biopsy but it will be a few days before the Histopathological results are in.”

“Are you concerned?”

“Of course I’m concerned. I’m scared half to death.”

I went out on the web and read about stomach cancer. ‘Abnormal tissue seen in a gastroscopic examination will be biopsied. This tissue is then sent to a pathologist for histological examination under a microscope to check for the presence of cancerous cells.’ 1+1=2. The doctor who performed the gastroscopic examination must have found something that required additional attention. Play dumb until Paul gets the results and if it’s ok, say great. Otherwise, be supportive of everyone involved.

Further reading indicated that gastric cancer wasn’t usually determined before it reached Stage III. Time was not on your side. Basically, it worked its way through the layers of your stomach and invaded the nearby lymph cells and metastasized (spread). The long term survival rate of metastasized cancer was close to zero. Yep, something really bad was going to happen, Paul, but it might not be what you think. On the other hand, we weren’t that far from the Meteor Crater.

It would take Jack and me close to two years to cut, split and stack the 150 cords of Arizona White Oak. The further along we got, the easier the task because we were working from largest to smallest and cutting up the branches last. We might cut them into 12” pieces to burn in the fireplaces. The bread was really very good and I suspected Alice was involved in the baking.

“It’s cancer, Stage IV.”

“I’m so sorry.”

“You suspected didn’t you?”

“I did. I checked it out on Wiki. Even at Stage III there was little that could be done with positive results. Surgery, Chemo or Radiation would only prolong his time and wouldn’t improve his quality of life.”

“That must be what the doctor told him. He told Mom and me that he was choosing to forego treatment. Did you know that he’s been transferring their property to our names since they moved down here?”

“How much has he transferred?”

“\$52,000 per year, \$13,000 to each of the four of us. He said the gold would be held by us and used for Mom’s needs and benefit. What they have is community property and we’ve received his entire share and a portion of her share. The precious metals are unrecorded, much like most of the firearms. I think she intends to continue the practice.”

“I hope he has a good lawyer.”

“The best. It’s legal, barely. Daddy liked to push the envelope. The gold is illegal to own, so what’s the difference.”

“More airplane talk. He’s been retired for several years. I never had it mind to flaunt the laws growing up.”

“He said he still hadn’t recouped his Social Security contributions. We flaunt the laws because the laws aren’t what our founding fathers intended. Thomas Jefferson is probably rolling over in his grave.”

“Any idea what Alice will do?”

“She loves that log home so she’ll probably stay there.”

“Keep a close eye on her; we wouldn’t want a repeat of what happened to my mother.”

“I will. She is a little stronger than your mother who I believe somehow felt responsible for your father’s death.”

“I never thought of that. She harped on him all the time. You could be right and maybe that’s why she couldn’t get over her grief.”

Paul’s doctor started him on morphine, prescribing prefilled syringes. He continued the Prevacid and Carafate as they provided him a modicum of relief. He slowed way down, probably due to the morphine. One thing he did do was hire another company to come in and turn those logs into firewood and divide it between our place and his place.

“And I thought it was just worry over something bad happening that was giving me the belly ache.”

“In the beginning it probably was. I did read a little on the subject and there’s more than one cause. I figured you’d outlive us all.”

“I figured out I’d have to live until 86 to recover my Social Security contributions. They cheated me out of 14 years. How are they coming on the firewood?”

“They’re using much large equipment than we were and moving along rapidly.”

“Understand something David, the equipment we disconnected and/or moved is still available for your use. You can always move the propane kitchen stove back into the house and your propane furnace only needs to be reconnected to the ducting.”

“We have two train carloads of coal to burn up in the furnace. We’re good for years. The same applied to firewood. Besides, since Alice taught Lynn her bread baking secrets, I’ve taken a hankering to home baked bread.”

“You know, I’ve been thinking. There is enough money available for Lynn and you to duplicate our homestead. You could double the PV panels and have 83 at both places. The same goes with the submarine batteries... you could bring them back up to two parallel banks. Our barns are identical copies and you wouldn’t need to change that. Your storage building should contain about the same number of PV panels as our garage.”

“Why would we want to do that?”

“Identical places for Paul and Jordan. You could live here while they demolished your home and dug up your shelter. Or, you could leave the shelter in place and use it for secure storage. The basement blast door could allow you access to your old shelter and your new subbasement. If you can make a quick decision, I can get the ball rolling. It might give me a goal to stick around just to see it finished.”

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“...and that’s what he suggested. What do you think?”

“Best idea I’ve heard in a month of Sundays. I’ll get busy moving our clothes. Our furniture dates back to when we married and has just enough life left in it to use it the subbasement. We can move the appliances from the shelter to the subbasement. How about we install large tanks and get the same generator as they have?”

“You’ve given this some thought?”

“Mom mentioned it. Yes, Daddy is working on you and Mom is working on me.”

“New Ethan Allen furniture?”

“It is nice.”

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“So Lynn said it’s a go.”

Arizona Black – Chapter 12

“Good, I have some things on order?”

“Oh really?”

“Yeah, 30k propane tank, 40k double wall fiberglass diesel tank and a 10k gasoline tank. The contractors are lined up to do the demolition and build your home. Turnkey.”

“Uh...”

“They’re waiting on Lynn and you to say ok.”

“Ok.”

“They’ll erect a tent with a floor to hold your possessions which the demolition and construction takes place. It will include moving anything you want in the subbasement down there before the lid is poured. Shelter appliances? Anything else?”

“A very large gun safe or two.”

“Consider it done.”

“I once commented to Lynn that a person best stay out of your way when you get up a head of steam.”

“I’ve always been like that and I’m not sure why.”

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Our new home was finished and occupied about ten days before Paul died. He didn’t say much but you could see the satisfaction in his eyes. He’d done the best he could to provide for his grandchildren. He’d purchased two of the largest gun safes on the market and transferred half of his firearms to one of them. The other safe held Alice’s guns.

He couldn’t get a 55kw Cummins generator and got the 80kw Kohler instead, the 80REOZJB with the 4V9 alternator putting out 300 amps. No derating below 5,000’ but derate 1% for every 18°F above 77°F. With luck, we could use one or both QD 12.5s to recharge the submarines batteries. All of the transfer switches were automatic and

prioritized using sun power followed by commercial power followed by generator power. Our AGM batteries had about given up the ghost and weren't replaced.

Paul was hospitalized his last five days. Alice had him buried under their Arizona Oak tree and had a granite marker placed with both their names. Totally illegal, but these days what wasn't. Concrete vault and a nice metal coffin but nothing fancy because Jack and I dug the grave. There were only five of us besides the minister. Eleanor Rigby?

Alice and Lynn picked out our new Ethan Allen furniture and it was delivered the day after our log home was finished. Except for minor difference in wood color, the homes were identical. The furniture in our new home was similar to theirs, but different fabrics. My den was very much like Paul's. Nice desk, computer ell, our old glass front gun cases, and a communications center with a duplicate of my old equipment as near as possible. Our monopole now boasted a set of Mosley beam antennas.

We'd done some horse trading and now had about a 50-50 mix of Tennessee Walking Horses and Morgan's between the two places, none over 12 years old. After their 12th birthdays, Jordan and Paul had been introduced to all of the Winchester and Marlin rifles as well as the Colt revolvers. We now had a set of three revolvers for each of us, one in each barrel length.

Alice had shared Paul's list of contacts and not a single weapon we bought on a 4473. Each was paid for in gold and or silver. Anything that was made that we wanted was available somewhere. We mostly used the old shelter to store ammo and any ordnance we'd accumulated, much as Paul had stored theirs in the basement of their garage. Didn't mention that 'cause I didn't know about it. The access was through the lubrication pit. *Surprise, surprise Sgt. Carter.* Garage door opener slide a storage cabinet aside.

One other thing while it's on my mind, the shingles. I figured 30 year shingles. They were 50 year shingles, the most durable asphalt shingles available. The PV panel installers even used the same holes on Paul's garage roof that we'd filled with tar and sand. They used the utmost care reinstalling the PV panels because the more you walk on a roof the more you damage the shingles.

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Major disaster wise the count had stopped at six. Because of the depth of our preparations, we rotated, replacing old with new, once a year. Alice shared some of theirs with Jack and his family and we sent in combined orders. The only ongoing disaster was climate change. Hot summers, cold winters, droughts that came and went, almost in cycles. The Arctic and Antarctic were slowly rebuilding their ice caps, interfering with Russia's attempts to recover arctic oil.

The Pacific Rim had mostly settled down and the west coast was undergoing a massive rebuilding effort. The government somehow found the money to complete the southern

border fence and added towers and seismic sensors. The only way to get into the US from Mexico was a Port of Entry or by boat.

Canada and the US, in a joint effort, began construction of a similar border wall on our northern border. Since the Great Lakes constituted a dividing line, a decision was reached to build the wall north of the lakes, well above historical high water marks, for a consideration. The US bore 65% of the construction costs and the Canadians 35%. The US would staff all the towers excluding those build on Canadian soil.

A portion of the Defense budget was diverted to build a new class of Coast Guard Cutters, specifically for the Great Lakes. They would be armed with the usual array of armament including the Mk 110 57 mm gun fore and aft and a forward Mk 75 rapid fire gun. The BAE Mk 110 had been deployed for years on open water Cutters. Canada, Mexico and the US adopted the mandatory requirement for the biometric Passport for border crossings.

Alice had a Passport up for renewal and the five of us drove down to Phoenix to get our 'papers' in order. They were delivered about 6 weeks later. We also renewed our CCW allowing us to carry concealed six-guns. That would teach us about making waves; guess who came back.

"What are you doing here Arnold?"

"The same thing as the last time. New home huh?"

"Let me see the warrant. No warrant no search."

"We have the authority to make warrantless searches."

"I don't care what you can or can't do. No warrant no search."

"Here you go."

"Picnic table?"

"Move it."

"Our firearms are in my den. The key is on top the rifle case. Where's Jonsey?"

"Dead. Never you mind, we have someone else to stay with you."

"Ok if I get the water and MREs now?"

"What are you talking about?"

“You’re going to search until you find something. Since there’s nothing to find, you’ll be here all day.”

“Carol, you go with him.”

“Aww...”

Where do they get these people? Carol probably couldn’t find any other work... she had a face that would stop a train in the dark and had a build similar to Jonsey. I got one of the new cases of Sure-Pack MREs and a full case of 20 ounce bottles of water. Paul carried the MREs out to the picnic table and I carried the water. The water was room temperature and I wasn’t going to cause trouble by asking to get a cooler and ice. It didn’t take as long in the house and Arnold asked what was in the storage building.

“Lower floor is all firewood and the second story is all canning supplies.”

“We’ll see.”

“Back so soon?”

“What’s in the barn?”

“There’re horses, feed and tack.”

“Alright, that leaves the garage. What’s in there?”

“A Suburban we call Rufus, a pickup, two Jeeps converted to diesel, oil, filters and spare parts. The trailers are behind the garage and there’s a duel fuel service station pump on one end.”

“I suppose you have a 40,000 gallon diesel tank.”

“In addition to a 15,000 gallons diesel tank, yes.”

“Propane?”

“Thirty thousand gallons buried. We’ll never run out. Gasoline is 10,000 gallons and kerosene in 1,000 gallons. That’s the tank on the stand.”

“Survivalist!”

“Absolutely.”

“Survivalists always have guns.”

“We did... right up until they passed the law taking away our Constitutional rights! When the Supreme Court finally overturns the law, we'll buy some more.”

“Where?”

“Anyplace we can find them. You guys didn't exist until 1886 and didn't really do much until prohibition was passed. When prohibition was repealed, you turn to the National Firearms Act for something to do. Have you ever read 'Unintended Consequences' by John Ross? If you haven't, maybe you should and pay close attention to Henry Bowman.”

“I've read it. Is that a threat?”

“No, just a suggestion; maybe you should read it a second time.”

“You can read?” Alice asked.

“Just who are you?”

“Her mother.”

“Name?”

“Alice.”

“Last name?”

“Heddens.”

“Husband named Paul?”

“Late husband, yes.”

“Where do you live?”

“Next place down the road.”

“What happened to Paul?”

“Gastric cancer.”

“Where's he buried?”

“In our backyard under an Oak tree.”

“We'll be back with a warrant.”

“Don’t bother, I consent to a search.”

“Why?”

“I have nothing to hide,” she said, thinking, “That isn’t already so well hidden you can’t find it.”

“Would you accompany us?”

“We’ll all go,” I replied. “It’s a family affair.”

A bit of background:

All six of the garage doors on their garage opened on a different opener. However, each door opener included two controls. All of the spares were on the shelf down in the lube pit, with batteries. However only one had the batteries installed correctly and the others had one battery reversed, creating a dead circuit. The one in the middle of the pile with the smudge of grease on it opened the door to the remainder of the garage basement. The TV control that made the entertainment center open was upstairs on the coffee table. Paul had been beyond careful.

His gun case in his den was different than ours, having Lexan rather than glass. He communications center had Yaesu amateur radios plus the Galaxy and Motorola. His computer was a bit older than mine and had Windows 7 and was password protected with a military grade password, ergo, two lower case letters, two upper case letters, two numerals, two symbols plus two additional characters of your choice and no complete words.

His handgun case contained 4 handguns, all Colt SAA. Two were 5½”, one was 4¾” and the last was 7½” and they were CC/B finishes. One of the 5½” was nearly pristine which the other three showed ample holster wear on the bluing. It was easy to assume which revolver belonged to Alice. The rifle case contained two Winchester Legacy rifles in .45 colt and 2 Marlin 1895 Cowboys in .45-70.

Because our place and their place were nearly identical, the search of the home didn’t take long. Alice had a quick word with John and he had an early lunch, staying out of the fray. One agent removed Paul’s FFL from the frame on the wall in his den. Either way, Alice had a folder of copies. They saved the garage for last finding the vehicles we told them they’d find in each stall. Arnold did raise a question about the half vacant 2nd floor and Alice told him Lynn and she had moved some canning jars to Lynn’s storage building.

“This is so fishy I could smell it in Phoenix.”

“You could dig him up, but he won’t talk.”

“And, I’ve had about all the smart mouth from you I care to hear.”

“Good, don’t come back. If you do, look out for the snakes.”

“Is that another threat?”

“No, good advice. Let me show you.”

“I hiked up my right pant leg and slid my boot down partway.”

“What got you?”

“Arizona Black Rattlesnake. What you see is how it healed up after the skin graft.”

“Damn. Are there a lot around here?”

“We see them from time to time. Years back I came close to getting bit up by Sedona. Later, I was walking my wife so she could get some exercise when she was expecting the twins. Sucker got me and didn’t even rattle. It took 18 vials of CroFab at \$2,500 per. I hope you got good insurance, the bill ran 6 figures.”

“I’m retiring soon, but somebody will be back.”

“Why don’t you give it a rest Arnold? Go search some liberal’s home, they probably do have guns.”

“It’s not Arnold; it’s Ted.”

“Kennedy?”

“How did you know?”

“I was being a smartass again.”

Actually, he looked more like Bill Clinton than Ted Kennedy. That sub machinegun Carol had looked like a full auto MP5/10. Last I knew only the FBI’s HRT carried the full auto version. I could tell it was in the full auto position, not the safety or burst.

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“Your Dad mentioned that our disaster count was off and it should be 8, not 6.”

“I don’t suppose Daddy dying counts, huh?”

“That was more of a tragedy than a disaster. I think whatever he worried himself to death over is still coming.”

“What do you mean he worried himself to death?”

“He has that constant problem with his stomach due to his concern about what was going to happen. He mistook that for the early symptoms of gastric cancer. That said, I’m inclined to believe him that we’re waiting for the final shoe to drop.”

“Is there anything more we can do?”

“Pray. We’re full up on food, can probably top off the fuel tanks using 5-gallon cans and we have more ammo than we’ll every use. We have a top of the line shelter, multiple sources of electricity and extra stored appliances in the shelter. We have 7,200 troy ounces of mixed gold and silver. We could get by for years without buying additional clothing and can probably get more should something happen. So, it’s hope for the best and deal with the worst.”

“Could we expand the barns with more stalls?”

“We can, but do we want to?”

“If we allow for mares with foal we have less than two mounts per rider. Let me check with Mom. I think they paid for the barn with gold. The thing is, Castlebrook is in Fontana, California.”

“Try giving them a call, you should have their number on the paperwork for your barn.”

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“Castlebrook Barns, how may I help you?”

“We have two Castlebrook barns you built for us. The first was under the Name Lynn Johnstone and the second was under the name of Paul Heddens. Are you still building barns?”

“Yes ma’am. Do you want warranty services or sales?”

“Sales. Our herds have grown and we wish to expand the barns. Is a manufacturer’s representative available?”

“Please hold while I connect you.”

“Ms. Johnstone, this is Ryan Hope, how may I help you?”

"We have two of your gambrel roof horse barns, each with eight stalls and hay lofts. We'd like an evaluation on the best way to expand both barns and add 8 additional stalls."

"It would probably be best if I could come to, uh, Bridgeport and check the barns."

"That's fine Ryan. When could you come?"

"It's Thursday. How about next Tuesday? What's the nearest major airport?"

"Flagstaff might be your best choice."

"Shall we say 1pm?"

"Fine. The barns are on contiguous properties and identical. Will that help?"

"Did we erect the barns or did you do it yourself?"

"Your company erected them."

"Anything else you wish to discuss?"

"We have more hay than the barns can hold. If I recall correctly, you have a solution for storing hay. Secondly, we could really use covered corrals, considering the summertime heat in this area."

"I'll bring a full set off brochures and we can discuss the options and costs."

"Thank you."

"Tuesday at 1pm and thank you Ms. Johnstone."

"It's Mrs. See you on Tuesday."

+++++

"Castlebrook will have a manufacturer's Rep here at one on Tuesday. I asked about expanding the barn, adding a sheltered corral and hay storage."

"How large of an expansion?"

"Since we don't have a foaling stall and use one stall to store tack, maybe 10 additional stalls including a foaling stall and a tack room. That would free up the original 8 stalls, add 7 additional stalls, plus a foaling stall and purpose built tack room. According to their website they also sell free standing saddle racks and mounted three tier saddle racks and six boot bridal racks."

“Fifteen regular stalls, a tack room and a foaling stall? They’re prices are probably higher too.”

“No doubt. Maybe we could get a volume discount that would cover installation costs.”

+++++

“Hi, I’m Ryan Hope from Castlebrook Barns.”

“David Johnstone. Let me get Lynn and we’ll take a look at the barn and listen to your pitch.”

“Hi, I’m Lynn Johnstone and we spoke last week. Let’s take a look, shall we?”

“It’s been well kept up. Did you have anything in particular in mind?”

“Extending the length, if it’s possible.”

“That would have been my suggestion Mrs. Johnstone. We could put the foaling stall and tack room in the new addition. You wanted the loft extended?”

“Yes plus a hay shelter. Our combined acreages only amount to 10 acres including 8 acres of pasture.”

“We’ll be adding a Brock grain bin for our COB and soybean meal mixture and automatic feeder systems for the grain and hay. We’d like those automatic waterers in each stall. We’re not sure where to locate the covered corral; perhaps you could make a suggestion.”

“Let me look around a bit more.”

“Wow, maximized the use of your available space. Perhaps put it behind the barn extension?”

“David?”

“That’s about the only place it would fit. Ok Mr. Hope, let’s talk money and then check the second barn.”

“...and that’s about the best we can do on a single installation. If you do both, we’ll pay for the normal installations costs using a local contractor we’ve used several times. You do realize that what you want is in a kit form that you could easily install yourself.”

“Maybe, but I don’t have a lot of free time. Between keeping the barn clean and related activities, my days are fairly full.”

“May we look at the other barn?”

“Sure follow us; it’s the next place down the road.”

“Morgan’s huh? You had Tennessee Walkers.”

“This is Lynn’s mother’s place.”

“Actually, Lynn’s family got started with Morgan’s many years ago. Lynn chose to go with Tennessee Walking Horses. When her folks moved down here, they sold the Morgan’s and bought the same horses Lynn had. Later, they switched back to Morgans.”

Arizona Black – Chapter 13

“The upgrades will cost the same as your place, less the installation I mentioned earlier.”

“What kind of break can you give us on tack room equipment?”

“Not much I’m afraid.”

“When Paul had this barn erected, Castlebrook accepted gold in payment.”

“Bought it before the law change?”

“Yes.”

“I don’t know about that. Do you want me to look into it?”

“You might want to talk to whoever is running the company, bypassing intermediaries.”

“I’ll let you know. If we can work that out, when would you need us to start?”

“Is yesterday too soon?”

“I had in mind about six weeks.”

“We’d like to put one condition on the deal.”

“What might that be?”

“No publicity. Period.”

“It’s your choice, we can agree to that. Expanding your herds?”

“That and selling off every animal over 12 years of age.”

“So, you breed them, train them and sell them when they’re in their prime?”

“A little past their prime. Prime is between 5 and 12 years of age.”

“But horses sometimes live to 30.”

“And humans sometimes live to 100. A five year old horse is 23½ human years old and a 12 year old horse is 40 human years old.”

You folk’s cowpunchers? I noticed the single action revolvers.”

“Naw; they’re not covered by the Assault Weapons Ban. A person never knows when a firearm may come in handy.”

“Honor one law and flaunt a second? Gold is illegal too.”

“Only in the US. FDR made it illegal, Nixon made it legal and the next law change made it illegal because of the so called oil shortage. The funny thing about that is that the oil shortage wasn’t due to the absence of oil but to refining capacity.”

“You should be grateful you don’t live in California, most firearms were illegal before the new Assault Weapons Ban and CCWs were limited to the select few, some legitimate and some capable of making large campaign contributions.”

“We don’t actually need a ccw here but maintain them in case we’re traveling in another state that honors the Arizona permits.”

“I’ll see what the big boss can do in cutting you some slack.”

“Thank you. It wouldn’t hurt if you mentioned Paul Heddens, Alice’s late husband. He seemed to know a lot of people.”

“Sure, it couldn’t hurt.”

+++++

The deal was struck and construction was set for four, not six weeks. The CEO would collect the payment in person, half up front and half after completion. We resumed our breeding program.

We hadn’t purchase meat in over a year and were gaining some freezer space. We made a trip up to Flagstaff and bought Jordan her first dress. Actually, two dresses,

three skirts and five blouses. She was starting to blossom and certain occasions called for something more than jeans. In the same veins, we bought Paul a dark gray suit plus two sport coats (Navy and Camel) and four pair of slacks. We also bought him an assortment of shirts in various styles and colors. We'd take them both back when we picked up the meat orders so they could buy the appropriate shoes. Probably a low heels for Jordan and wingtips for Paul.

We ordered what Paul always ordered, Black Angus beef, two cases of Cure 81 hams, two cases of thick sliced bacon and two cases of whole chickens on ice. We'd inventoried our liquor supply and got another case of Single barrel, Cognac and filled in bottles of other liquors, mixes and liqueurs. I planned to make a trip to the Res for more smokes, at least a case and one half of what I smoked and one case and a half of Marlboros. They had to order the extra case of Kool's and Marlboros and I took home the half and half case of Kool's and Marlboros. Marlboros are the largest selling brand of cigarettes in the world while Kool's have a much smaller market share, ranking 8th during 2000.

The cigarette store called and I picked up the smokes, mid-week. The following weekend I took Paul shoe shopping and Lynn took Jordan. Paul picked a plain tip cordovan and black wingtips. We had time and filed the four 250s and one 105 with the meat. And then picked up a fifth 250 and loaded the remainder of the meat, the hams and bacon.

After returning home, the meat was divided up with a fourth going to Alice and our taking the rest. Lynn called her about the chickens and she said to keep her quarter on ice so she could cut up and seal a portion and keep a few whole. We made it over there around three pm and put the various meats where she indicated. We left her to finish up and headed to Jerome's Palace for supper.

"Want to hit Costco in Prescott tomorrow?"

"Yes, we could use a few things and Jordan has some special needs."

Thirteen + special needs suggested Daddy's little girl was a woman. I suggested that if we had the time and space after Costco, it would be a good time as any to lay in an adequate supply for our daughter. I should have realized; her new dresses needed darts. Maybe I should look into getting a Louisville Slugger the next time I get to Flagstaff. On the other hand about the only person who could outdraw and out shoot Jordan was Wild Bill Hickok. Grandpa must have given some lessons we didn't know about.

Apparently it was too personal for Jordan so Lynn and she would make a special trip to Wal-Mart. Lynn said with as many different products as they had, it would require some experimentation. Any product that was unsatisfactory would be relegated to the trade goods.

'A few things' included some OTC meds, Folgers, Crisco, oil, sugar and various canned meats. They were replacements for things we'd used. After we returned home and unloaded, I decided to inventory the ammo and ordnance. We had two Tac-50s and 12,000 rounds of ammo, unopened. We had two Super Match rifles and 12,000 rounds of 178gr and the same of 168gr for the Loadeds, again unopened. Rather than make a 4 page list, let me say, we had enough.

Some things changed and some didn't. We'd stopped entertaining and no longer accepted invitations, generally giving a plausible excuse. We were unemployed, barely making ends meet or too busy doing this, that or the other to accept the gracious invitation. The truth on the other hand was we had enough food to feed Cottonwood and the few residents of Bridgeport. We had enough or more everything a person or family would need for years. But, we were survivalists cum preppers and one didn't spread that around.

There were obviously no outward signs, except for the solar panels, the deliveries of the many additions, a barn about to undergo expansion, fuel deliveries, buried tanks, etc. Nope, they didn't have a clue. The carpenter knew about the hidden wall but the old house had been torn down and replaced. We were so close to highway 89 to our south, passersby could even see the PV panels. We could have taken out an ad in the Verde Independent and listed most everything we had and would not surprise many locals. Greyman was a member of one of the forums.

Something I'd read in a story titled 'Indecision', Jerry D Young if I'm not mistaken said and I quote

"DHS tries. At least some of the time. But the bad guys are always coming up with new ways to inflict terror on people. Americans especially. And what about a natural disaster? There is nowhere on earth that is immune to everything. Each area has one or more things that are dangerous." (end quote, emphasis added)

The Department of Homeland Insecurity (do they make YOU feel secure) had a reasonably good track record when it came to stopping plots before they were implemented. The first and second most powerful military powers on the planet both failed to solve the problems in Afghanistan. At least our SEAL Team 6 got bin Laden. And, Operation Red Dawn caught Saddam.

Despite 8 major disasters, we hadn't been directly affected. Yeah, I'm repeating myself. I'd wager to say that number 9 would be a doozy. Surprisingly, it didn't come about until 2029 after the kids 18th birthdays after they'd graduated high school. Jordan wanted to be a Veterinarian and Paul wanted Bachelor's Degree in Animal Husbandry. Fortunately, they could both attend the same college.

Alice was hanging in there, hoping, at least, see Paul graduate. The DMV program took a longer time frame and she was getting up in years. So were Lynn and I. We both were in the salt and pepper hair stage, but had managed by some miracle to remain fit. Over

the past 5-6 years, we'd expanded our livestock to include chickens, both for eggs and meat. Each spring, we'd start out with 120 pullets and butcher 100 of them when they reached the 3-4 pound size. The other 20 produce our eggs supply which was divided 50-50 with Alice. She shared her portion with Jack and their two boys.

Jacks oldest boy had graduated high school and went to a Farrier School. The other stayed home and did most of Jack's job. Jack had a series of accidents. The first was when his was splitting firewood with a dull axe and no safety equipment. It took him several months to heal up.

This second accident was when he tripped over something and fell face first into the tractor, busting out about half of his teeth and ended up with dentures. They did a good job of sewing him up though and the scars weren't particularly noticeable. Finally, his son and he were mending some fence and didn't pay as good of attention as they should have.

He got to experience a snake bite first hand. While they didn't identify the species, the treatment was fairly universal, CroFab. It was up to \$8,000 per box of two vials and it took 8 vials to solve his problem. His treatment was still in the high five figures and since it was a work related injury, it was covered by insurance.

One a slightly different subject, Lynn and I had a radio technician in Flagstaff go through every piece of our communications equipment as well as replace all of the coaxial cables. While he was at it, his soldering pencil slipped and now our TS-2000s were all-band. We'd installed a TS-2000, Cobra SSB mobile and business band radio in the kids Jeeps. We also donated our FRS/GMRS radios to the Boy Scouts. Our two now had their Oregon Scientific WR602s and portable Business Band and CB radios.

We supplied Alice with meat and eggs and her Social Security was more than she spent. She was selling horses to maintain a constant stock level and the proceeds covered Jack's compensation and then some. She sure didn't have any problems splurging on the kids' birthday and Christmas.

By now, we had all of Paul's firearms excluding those she identified as hers. While the Barrett M82A1M in .416 was still her gun, it was too heavy for her to handle and she gave it to Jordan and gave Paul's M82A1M in .50 BMG to Paul. The following Christmas, Lynn and I gave each of the kids a Magnum Universal Night Sight (MUNS) and suggest we keep the 6X Raptors in our armory for use on one of the other rifles.

I got to wondering about some of our ordnance. Where can I look to determine the shelf life of the M-61s, M-67s and M-72A7s? I suppose I should ask the same about M-183 demolition kits and whether the no. 8 military caps or the C-4 is what I should be concerned about.

On our LTS foods, I suspect that some of the Mountain House products were probably getting close to the end of their shelf lives too. We kept the shelter temperature at a

stable 55°F. The other food items that we grew and canned seemed to last about 2 years and we reduced the size of the garden to just enough to supply the four of us, Alice and Harry's family.

All in all things went well during the next four years and Paul graduated with his degree in Animal Husbandry. He was engaged to a rancher's daughter and they were planning on a June wedding in just a few days. Michelle was a pretty young thing who could ride with the best of them and they'd spent quite a bit of their free time familiarizing her with the weapons in his collection she hadn't used before, generally using our range.

Jordan was a year into getting her DVM degree. She hadn't really had the time to find 'Mr. Perfect' but did like one of the other DVM students who was also studying for a large animal practice. His family didn't live that far away, over in the Prescott Valley area. They were discussing possibly setting up a large animal practice in Cottonwood, as partners.

During Jordan's final year, Alice had a stroke which left her an invalid. She was paralyzed on one side and couldn't speak. We moved her in with us and hired an LPN to attend to her needs. Paul and Michelle moved into Paul and Alice's home and attended to both horse herds. The immediate area is anything but flat for the most part and at best was pasture land.

Lynn and I discussed it and contacted a realtor looking to buy an adjoining 70 acres of pasture. He found a parcel but it lacked fencing and a well. As the land was ill suited for most purposes, we had little trouble acquiring it. We bought in a well driller to put in a well, a fencing company to install a wooden fence and called our friendly Castlebrook Barn representative about erecting a pasture shelter in the new pasture. He on the other hand had grandiose ideas concerning what we needed.

Frustrated with the pressuring he was applying, I asked, "Who is your largest competitor?"

"Why?"

"Maybe they hire people without hearing problems."

"Yes sir, one pasture shelter. How many head of horses?"

"Sixty head."

"Raised floor or dirt?"

"Dirt. With hay racks, grain bins and automatic waterers."

"I'll forward you a proposal."

“While you at it check the modification you made to Lynn Johnstone’s barn and Paul Heddens’ barn and calculate the cost of doubling the size the same as was done the last time.”

“Yes sir. Will you need financing?”

“No we’ll pay for the additions the same as we did last time. Check with your CEO.”

“Yes sir, I’ll check with my sales manager.”

“Still having hearing problems? Who did I ask you to check with? If I wanted you to check with your sales manager, I’ve would have said so.”

“That’s not how it’s done.”

“Trust me; do it our way.”

Gold had continued slide upward slowly. A week later the manufacturer’s rep called back and wanted to know when they could start.

“Do the pasture shelter first and then the barns one at a time.”

“Ah, we can actually do both barns at the same time if you prefer. Do you want an additional tack room and foaling stall?”

“Yes to the foaling stall and no to the tack room. Just make that a regular stall.”

“We can start in three weeks. The CEO will come with us initially to collect the down payment.”

“Good.”

The well was in and produced good water. The fence would be completed within ten days.

“Is this going to be large enough for your planned operations Paul?”

“I think so Dad. We might add another grain silo for the COB and soybean meal mix and expand the hay shelter.”

“Here’s the guy’s number, call him about the hay shelter. Here another number for the grain bin company, Brock. Just so you know, we’re not paying for this; you are out of your inheritance.”

“How’s grandma doing?”

“Not well. Your mother and I believe it’s just a matter of time.”

“And time is not on her side?”

“Exactly.”

+++++

“Alice surprised us. She not only attended Jordan graduation, she also attended her wedding. But, it was a losing struggle and we got the call from the LPN that Alice was in the hospital. She was in a coma and didn’t recover. Paul and Jack’s son dug the grave and we laid her to rest next to Paul. Lynn and I were now the oldest generation of the living family. We got an apartment in Cottonwood and Jordan and Carl moved into our home, commuting to their practice in Cottonwood.

After everyone was settled in, we four brought Michelle and Carl up to speed on all of our preparations. Both were rural Arizonians so the firearms and ordnance didn’t cause them to have heart failure, but it was a near thing. They were more tuned into the ‘Cowboy’ guns and the military hardware came as a total shock. Especially so, when our inventory of NFA weapons was revealed and they learned how few were actually on the NFR. Unfortunately the AWB was still in effect.

“Your secret is safe with me, but why? You get caught and they’ll lock you and toss the key.”

“Michelle, questions? Might as well try to answer them all at once.”

Not really. My Father has some pre-FOPA full-auto weapons. He said it was just in case.”

“Carl, I’m afraid I agree with Michelle’s father. Except for some of our ammo, everything we bought was legal until the new AWB. Lynn’s father was a Class III dealer and he acquired a substantial inventory of pre and post FOPA firearms. Jordan will eventually show you our preparations.”

“I’ve obviously seen some. You have PV panels feeding that dual battery bank plus a pair of charge controllers and 7 7kw inverters. I take it that the one not hooked in is a spare.”

“Right.”

“But what if the sun doesn’t shine?”

“We have an ATS that switches to commercial power coming through another ATS which is connected to an 80kw generator. We originally started with a RV generator, a QD 12.5. Later, we added a second and they’re hooked up to recharge the batteries.”

"I noticed that you use wood and coal for heat. The only thing on gas is your water heater."

"The dryers are also propane. The old house was originally heated with a wood/coal furnace and a propane furnace was installed later. The propane furnace is sitting next to the wood furnace and all you have to do is switch the ducting. The propane kitchen stove is in the storage building."

"Where do you get your coal?"

"It came from Wyoming. We use about 5 tons a year and so do Paul and Michelle. We began with 240 tons which gave us a 24 year supply. It's stored at Paul's."

"We set up a privately held real estate investment trust and it owns all 80 acres. It produces a nominal amount of income and covers the taxes. The remaining income is divided between Paul and Jordan and reported on their 1040s. It makes a profit, but not much."

"You each have homesteads that are similar. Paul's has a three story, six stall garage while Jordan and you have the two story storage building. If you've checked, the storage building it is filled with firewood on the main floor and canning supplies on the second floor."

"Lynn and I got a small upright freeze for our apartment and will take a share of the meat we buy every year to keep your freezers full. We expect you to supply us with chickens and eggs. Jack's younger boy and his wife can care for the chickens and do the butchering and so on."

"Carl, both barns are the same. Each has one tack room and two foaling stalls. I suggest you keep Paul keep the Morgans and let Jordan keep the Tennessee Walking horses. We'll be out at least once a week to ride and shoot. It's up to the four of you to decide who ends up with .416 Barrett and the M82. Your mother and I will keep an assortment of firearms at our apartment, including the Tac-50s and Super Matches."

+++++

"I think Carl was in shock."

"At least you didn't tell him everything we have, David."

"I didn't want him to have a heart attack. And, what he doesn't know can't hurt us."

"Did Paul check out Michelle on our entire collection?"

"She favors the HK-416 and Browning Hi-Power."

“Check her out on the 124gr +P Gold Dot?”

“Eventually, yes. She said it was a handful. He said she could handle just fine.”

“What do you want to do for dinner?”

“How about getting dressed up and going to the restaurant in Prescott? I made reservations.”

“Is that still there? Sure, I’ll shower first and get dressed while you shower and shave.”

“You haven’t worn that dress in a long time.”

“I was surprised it still fit. Remember the last time I wore it?”

“Give me a hint.”

“The last time we went to that restaurant.”

“But, that was over 20 years ago.”

“It was a special occasion and I had it cleaned and put up.”

+++++

The road from Cottonwood to Prescott had a reputation for being dangerous. David and Lynn made it to Prescott and had a good time. Coming back to Cottonwood, an oncoming driver took a curve too wide and there was a head-on collision. Despite the seat belts, shoulder harnesses and air bags, there were no survivors. Jacks two sons dug two more graves under the Arizona Oak.

It was disaster number 9 for David and Lynn. The REIT was dissolved and each child took 40 acres with an agreement to share the pasture. Jordan took her mother’s Tac-50 and Paul took his father’s. Michelle ended up with Alice’s Barrett and Carl with Paul’s Barrett.

Paul and Jordan divided the gold and silver equally and didn’t mention it to their spouses since it was still illegal to own as were most of their firearms. It would be another generation before those laws and/or Executive Orders were repealed, but it happened.

Americans were very tired of a government that was not beholding to the people and used the ballot box rather than firearms to solve their internal problems. Eventually, what had started out as the Tea Party had gotten control of both houses of Congress and the White House. The Constitution was amended to clarify the rights set forth in the

Bill of Rights. Nearly all firearms laws were repealed and states were told to conform or lose federal funding. California was the last holdout before they too, developed reasonable gun laws. The final shove for California came when the Supreme Court overturned Miller, invalidating all but the manufacturing and dealers licenses provision of the NFA.

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