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Frontiersman

Facing the truth, however great the cost.
September 2007

The story presented below takes place near and in the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness. For the benefit of those readers who aren't familiar with it, that wilderness is a huge piece of land, 2.3 million acres, in Idaho. It's adjacent to the Gospel Hump Wilderness and some additional roadless Forest Service land. Together with those areas, it constitutes 3.3 million acres of allegedly roadless land. It's separated from the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness by a single dirt road. It contains parts of several mountain ranges, including the Salmon River Mountains, the Clearwater Mountains, and the Bighorn Crags. Except for some grandfathered use of jetboats and several grandfathered airstrips, civilians are prohibited from taking any motorized devices into the area.

—author

Bill, Bob, and the Dirty Trickster

Fiction by Sam Aurelius Milam III
with thanks to Lady Jan the Voluptuous

It's been six years since this stuff all happened but it seems like it was yesterday. I was huntin' deer in Idaho near that big wilderness area. They's a lot o' little roads back in there an' I got lost an' was just drivin' around. Tha last town I remembered seein' was a little place called Dixie, remembered it 'cause o' tha name, but it was miles behind me when tha bus broke. I'd left ma Hummer with a friend ta make some changes that I didn't want tha dealer ta know about. Odds an' ends. Anyway, tha bus was a wore out ol' VW an' it jus clanked onest an' died. So, I shouldered what I could carry an' started walkin' back out. Never did see tha bus again. What luck. I hadn't gone two miles yet when some guy in a GMC pickup offered me a ride. Said his name was Bob. Said he'd let me stay tha night at his place an' then pull tha bus back ta town fer me in tha mornin'.

I was already lost. By tha time we got ta his place I was even more lost. Never seen so many twisty little roads in my life. One place we went through didn't look like no road at all. Couldn't figure how he ever found it tha first time. When we finally pulled inta his place, I noticed some weird stuff right away. Biggest damned propane tank I ever saw off ta tha side. A mighty fine over-sized gravel parkin' lot in front. Darned good gravel road headin' off ta tha southeast, somewhere. Best road I'd seen fer miles. I got out, stepped back ta git my stuff

outa the back o' his truck an he said, "Don't bother. You won't be needing it." I looked up an' he was pointin' a .45 right between my eyes. Never did see where he got it from. He took me inta tha house where they was another guy waitin' fer us. "Hey Bill!" he said, "Lookie! I got us a toy!" I got that panic inside o' me that ya git when somethin' bad happens. Bill said, "He'll hafta wait. I just got word that there's a big shipment on the way. They'll be here any minute now."

They took me into tha kitchen, past three big Rottweilers, an' pushed me through a door where they was some stairs down ta tha cellar. They was one light hangin' on a wire, with tha switch in tha kitchen an' they turned it off when they left. I got some light through tha windows, wide, short ones near tha roof, right at ground level. They was one at one end o' tha cellar and two on the long front wall. Bill an' Bob didn't lock tha door when they went out but I'd saw how them Rottweilers'd been watchin' me while Bill an' Bob was taking me through tha kitchen. Them dogs was all tha lock they needed.

Tha cellar was mostly a storage place. Had a little o' everything. They was a workbench at one end, under tha window, with a lotta tools. They was a water heater an' a furnace at tha other end. Tha walls was cinder block. I was standin' there with that funny feelin' ya git when bad things happen real quick. In a minute or two, I heard motors and gravel scrunchin' so I went an' looked out one o' tha front windows.

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Just then they was two troop carriers an' a bus came drivin' into tha parkin' lot, comin' outa tha gravel lane that went off ta tha southeast. I swear ta God. No markin's but troop carriers fer sure. About 20 men piled out, wearin' camo an' armed ta tha teeth. No insignia but they acted like soldiers. Two more of 'em got outa tha bus. They acted like officers. Tha bus had bars on tha windows.

A whole bunch o' people got outa tha bus an' tha soldiers started herdin' 'em toward tha house, pokin' 'em with their gun barrels if they didn't git along quick enough. Tha people that got outa tha bus was jus plain ol' people. Musta been more 'an 60 of 'em. Men, women, and kids. Some had luggage. One o' tha kids had a teddy bear. They was 'bout a half dozen that was wearin' some kinda uniforms. One of 'em was carryin' a bag an' when they walked past tha window I saw it said American Airlines. A few of 'em'd been beaten, especially one o' tha men in tha uniforms. He could barely walk. They was all terrified. Some o' tha women 'ad been cryin'. I decided tha uniforms was airline uniforms. Pilots and stewardesses.

Tha soldiers herded 'em outa sight around tha end o' tha house. Bill an' Bob went with 'em. I didn't know what was goin' on but I didn't want no part of it. I started lookin' around fer some way ta git out. With them Rottweilers in tha kitchen, I knew it wouldn't be that way. I found a sledge hammer in all tha junk, pulled tha workbench outa tha way, an' started breakin' tha cinder blocks from under tha end window. Ya might doubt it but panic can give ya tha strength o' ten. I broke all o' tha blocks in tha row under tha window an' at tha ends of it. Them dogs was raisin' hell in tha kitchen but they couldn't get through tha door an' nobody heard 'em so I just smashed tha blocks 'til I couldn't swing tha hammer no more. Then I found me a crow bar an' started to pry tha window loose but my arms was so tired I couldn't hardly move 'em an' then I decided I didn't want nobody outside ta notice a missin' window no-how, so I stopped.

I was plumb tuckered, ma arms was tremblin', an' I was breathin' hard but when I

stopped yankin' at tha window with ma crow bar I started to think an' had a second look around. Tha propane furnace at tha other end o' tha cellar gave me a idea. I'd fixed some bullies onest with propane when I was a kid and maybe I could do it again. Damn good luck for me they put me where they did. Tha place was a gold mine o' old junk. I found a hack saw, turned off tha propane valves fer tha furnace an' tha water heater, and sawed off tha pipes. The overhead light hung by a lectric cord that was stapled ta tha beams so I found a hammer an' pulled loose a couple o' staples so tha light hung most o' tha way ta the floor. Then I tapped on the bulb real gentle with tha claws of the hammer 'til tha glass broke. Lucky fer me I didn't break tha filament. I hoped when somebody turned on tha light tha filament would burn real hot fer a few seconds. If they was tha right amount o' propane, it might work. I left it hangin' an' went back ta tha window ta see what was happenin'.

I guess by then them soldiers was done 'cause they came back from wherever they'd went an' got into their troop carriers. Tha two that acted like officers got into tha bus. They all drove away. I waited a coupla minutes but Bob and Bill didn't show up right away so I got my crow bar an' pulled in tha window. I left it hangin' by its flanges on one end. Then, I went over an' turned on both propane valves an' came back an' crawled outa tha window. I pulled it back into place, good as I could. Nobody'd notice 'less they was lookin' fer it. I walked 'round tha end o' tha house tha way that everbody else'd gone.

Behind tha house they was a cinder block buildin' with a steel door on tha end facin' me, mostly closed but not quite. Just outside o' tha door was a pile o' stuff, clothes, purses, small luggage, an' a teddy bear. I heard noises inside so I went as quiet as I could 'round tha back o' tha buildin'. On tha far end they was a chimney an' some o' tha most bad smellin' smoke I ever smelled. Like ta of made me gag. I squatted down with my back against tha wall, tryin' ta breathe, an' it saved my life 'cause I was down behind some bushes that was growin' there when Bill an' Bob came outa tha buildin'. I didn't

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see 'em but I heard 'em standin' there talkin' 'bout what they was plannin' fer me. What they was sayin' made me keep real quiet 'til they was gone. I was shakin' from bein' tired, from tha smell o' tha smoke, an from bein' scared but when they went back 'round tha end o' tha house I got up an' slipped 'round tha corner o' tha cinder block buildin' an' looked in tha door. Them people from tha bus was all dead, shot. Musta been a hell of a scene when them soldiers done it. Musta been tha soldiers. Couldn't o' been nobody else. They ain't no words for it. That wasn't tha worst. Tha way that some o' them dead women was layin' made me try not ta think what Bill an' Bob 'ad been doin' to 'em after tha soldiers 'ad left but I guess it kept 'em busy while I got outa tha cellar an' behind tha cinder block buildin'. I spose them women couldn't o' been hurt no more nohow but it still gave me tha worst feelin' yet. I didn't even feel real no more.

Sometimes, ya kin see a lot more in one quick look than ya ever wanna remember an' I jus' took one look through tha door an' turned an' ran as hard as I could. That saved my life again. I ran straight out from tha place, didn't even know where I was goin', over a hill, down a slope, an' stumbled an' fell into a gully. Just as I hit tha bottom, they was a big boom an pieces o' house started ta fall all 'round me. I guess tha light bulb worked. I didn't even notice, right then. I just laid there an' cried.

After a few minutes, I got up, climbed outa tha gully, an' went back fer a look at tha house. They wasn't much left o' tha place 'cept a cellar-shaped hole in tha ground. The near wall o' the cinder block buildin' had got blowed over by tha blast an' fell in an' covered most o' tha dead people. At tha far end o' tha cinder block buildin' they was a little room with a iron rack, a big propane burner, an' what was left o' some people. They was mostly burned but tha blast had blowed out tha fire. I didn't see no trace o' Bill, Bob, or them Rottweilers. I dug ma stuff outa what was left o' tha pickup truck an' walked away.

When I got back ta town, a few days later, an heard 'bout them airplanes that was hijacked in

New York an' tha Pentagon, it all made some kinda sense. Don't you believe nothin' tha gov'ment says 'bout what happened on 911 six years ago. It's all a pack o' lies. None o' them hijacked planes never hit no buildin's. They was all landed safe somewhere an' everbody on 'em was murdered an' burned. Tha folks that I saw was one bunch of 'em. They was all people from one o' them planes that got hijacked. I reckon them soldiers went back later an' finished burnin' 'em, when they found out tha place had got blowed up.

I've thought about it a lot since then an' I think that they's some kinda secret gov'ment base hid out there in them woods. I don't know what goes on there but ain't none of it good or why would they hide it from us in a wilderness? Bill an' Bob wasn't part of it 'cause they wasn't soldiers. They was too careless ta be soldiers, but they worked fer 'em. They all picked a damned good place ta put their house fer murderin' people an' burnin' 'em, tha River of No Return Wilderness.

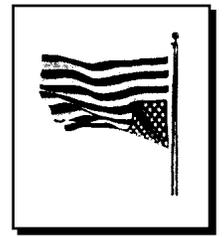
Whenever I get a chance, I hike back in there. Try ta disguise myself a little differnt ever time, just in case, but I ain't never seen tha same guys twice. Anyway, they's some damned scary people in there, armed ta tha teeth an' wearin' camo, just like tha ones on them troop carriers. Fer a long time, whenever I got too close to their base, they chased me out. I kept smilin', actin' stupid, sayin' yes sir, sorry sir, won't happen again sir, an' goin' back again tha next chance I got. Ever time, I marked it on my map. Now, I got a boundary. I know where they stop people so I know where they are, close enough. Over tha last six years, I got a lot better at it than I usta be. Nowadays, when I go in they don't see me 'less I show myself an' I got ma route all planned, jus' outside o' where they stop people.

It's a forest, right? I like tha woods as good as tha next guy but tha next long dry spell that happens, when tha wind is right, me an' a big ol' box o' kitchen matches is gonna send some o' them bastards back ta visit Bill an' Bob. Tha ones that git away won't have no forest left ta hide their nasty doins' in no more. 🦅

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Nation in Distress

A man who doesn't fear his government is naive. A man with faith in its inherent benevolence is a fool.
—May 28, 1976
Milam's Notes



Acknowledgments

My thanks to the following: Sir James the Bold; SantaClara Bob; Lady Jan the Voluptuous; Lord Jeffrey the Studious; my mother; Sir Donald the Elusive; and Larry, of Russellville, Arkansas. —editor

Bible Questions and Answers

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by ccranal.

- Q Where is the first tennis match mentioned in the Bible?
A When Joseph served in Pharaoh's court.
Q Which servant of Jehovah was the most flagrant lawbreaker in the Bible?
A Moses. He broke all 10 commandments at once. ∞

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Changing Times

Original Source Unknown.

Forwarded by Steve, of Fremont, California.

Scenario: Pedro fails high school English.

1956: Pedro goes to summer school, passes English, and goes to college.

2006: Pedro's cause is taken up by the state Democratic Party. Newspaper articles appear explaining that an English requirement for graduation is a racist policy. The ACLU files a class action lawsuit against the state school system and Pedro's English teacher. English is banned from the core curriculum. Pedro is given a diploma anyway but ends up mowing lawns for a living because he can't speak English. ∞

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—Sam Aurelius Milam III, editor

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