

WHAT I SAW THAT DAY

Israel's June 8th, 1967 Holocaust
of US Servicemen
Aboard the USS LIBERTY
and its Aftermath



PHILLIP F. TOURNEY, USS LIBERTY SURVIVOR
and MARK GLENN

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By

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To my friends, the brave men, both living and dead, who served aboard the good ship USS LIBERTY...Attacked by an ally, betrayed by their own government, forsaken by their country and forgotten in the hearts of their fellow Americans, except for those of us who were there that day and saw everything...



Me, Phillip Francis Tourney, shortly after entering the U.S. Navy. In addition to being the only 3-time president of the Liberty Veterans Association, as well I was awarded the following in service to my country--

- Outstanding Recruit Citation, Boot Camp Company 128 San Diego, California 1964
- Bronze Star with Combat V for Valor
- Purple Heart
- Vietnam Service Medal with one Bronze Star
- National Defense Service Medal
- Combat Action Ribbon
- Presidential Unit Citation
- Navy E
- 2 Honorable Discharges

Out of all these awards and medals, not a word was mentioned about the murders committed by Israel, the terrorist state that killed my beloved shipmates and almost killed me. To this very minute, the U.S. government continues in its cover-up of these war crimes.

As you will see within the pages of this book, one of America's greatest heroes and one near and dear to my heart is Rick Aimetti, who is yet to receive even an aluminum wrapper for his heroic deeds the day our ship was attacked, much less the medals he deserves. And although his great deeds have been ignored and forgotten by an ungrateful nation, they have not been forgotten by me and never will.

A Prayer

Lord, ours is a troubled land in dire need of healing...Like a pox whose appetite for destruction does not discriminate between young or old, a sickness--seemingly impervious to all remedies--pervades everything...

We, the men of the USS LIBERTY, sons of both your heavenly estate and of America, have watched as this sickness has devoured our nation and our people like a raging fire...The country we grew up in, the country we loved and swore to die protecting has become something else, unrecognizable in its madness...What was once a good and Godly land has now become perverse and unnatural...

We, the men of the USS LIBERTY know your omniscience and omnipotence...We know you see all Lord and know all and that we are living proof that miracles happen, because by all accounts we should have been sunk that day as the architects of evil had planned, and surely we would have, were it not for Your graces, for You did not allow this to happen Lord...

And now, once again Lord, just as during the terrible hours of our attack almost 43 years ago, we offer up a prayer...Not for gold, silver, power, fame or notoriety, but rather the incalculable riches of knowing we once again live in a righteous land...We ask that our country and our people be healed of this devouring sickness,

confidently assured by Your promise that "If my people, called by My name will humble themselves and turn from their wicked ways" that You will hear our cries for mercy from heaven and heal our land...

This book is part of that cry, Lord, and we ask that you bless the endeavor that the writers and all those associated with this work wish to achieve, and--just as You did almost 43 years ago in preventing our ship USS LIBERTY from succumbing to the evil and violence done to her that day--that likewise you will keep the battered and beaten ship of state, America, from sinking as well...

Twice Lord, when the people followed You into the desert to fill their hungry souls with Your words and teachings and who had eaten nothing for 3 days, You would not send them home hungry...And with a mere few fishes and loaves of bread, you multiplied what was given to You in faith and childlike trust unto an abundance for Your people who were willing to trade empty stomachs for sated souls...At the wedding feast of your cousin when they had run out of wine and Your Blessed Mother asked for your intercession, You did so, even though it did not coincide with Your schedule, producing wine that surpassed all human expectation...

We, the men of the LIBERTY, as well as their families and friends who recognize the sickness of our land are those 5,000 Lord, and ask that You not send us away hungry...Pour forth your blessings, as wine from heaven to heal our land and bind its wounds...

Just as your own apostles slept in the Garden of Gethsemane as you prayed, the people of America sleep Lord...They do not see that evil men approach with clubs and swords, ready to destroy all that is good and meaningful in their lives...Well over a generation has passed since our ship was attacked and still we watch the people sleeping while we stand as watchmen over them...

Lord, just as You offered Your own blood as an atonement for the sins of an ungrateful world, we, the men of the LIBERTY, offer up the blood, sweat and tears we have shed in the 43 years we have spent in our own private hells and beg that You accept this sacrifice

on our part, as imperfect and incomplete as it is, as payment for the sins of our people...

Will our prayer be heard Father?...Will the people of this once-great land listen to your humble servants?...

Only you know the answer to that Lord, but we beg nevertheless that our efforts of the past 43 years not go in vain. May You have mercy on America, this great land brought forth by Your mighty hand, Thy will be done.

Ron Kukal, Survivor, USS LIBERTY
Chaplain, Liberty Veterans Association
February 24, 2010

Prologue

I could go into highly detailed timelines and technical discussions about what happened to me and my shipmates the day we were attacked by Israel. That has already been done, with books such as Jim Ennes' *Assault on the Liberty*, Peter Hounam's *Operation Cyanide* and most recently, James Scott's *Attack on the Liberty*. By the way, let me state right from the beginning that all us USS LIBERTY survivors are indebted to James Ennes Jr, officer aboard the LIBERTY for kicking the door open on this discussion with him writing the very first book on the LIBERTY attack.

The reason I won't go into minute timelines is because at this stage in the game, it does not matter. We can leave that for historians and other highly-skilled technicians to deal with later. The day we were attacked, I was fighting just to stay alive. Therefore, I was not afforded the luxury of looking at my Timex every five minutes in order to form a perfect chronological transcript in my mind as to what happened. My main concern was not keeping perfect tabs about what was happening at what time but rather wondering, "Where's my next breath going to come from?"

For the record, let me state this up front as well: I do not put any stock in the ship's logs. Some of the people who signed off on the

“official” timelines of the event were not even present during the attack.

No doubt there will be those who will make it their life’s mission to discredit my story. They will scour every letter, every word, every sentence, every paragraph, every page and every chapter for the slightest “blip” or discrepancy that can be used in disproving what I know to be a fact. I have seen this same type of action taken against others who dared venture into the same dangerous waters I am wading in now. Let them say what they want. It doesn’t matter, because I know what I know, which is that the attack on our ship was deliberate and lasted approximately as long as the attack on Pearl Harbor that brought the U.S. into WWII.

As I said, I will leave the long, contentious discussions for the scientists at a later time. Right now, my job as an eyewitness to an act of war against my country is to tell a horrible story. Israel got away with the cold-blooded, pre-meditated murder of my shipmates, pure and simple. But as bad as the murder of thirty-four of my shipmates was, what is even more horrifying is the fact that the entire world was brought to the brink of nuclear annihilation on that same day. And for those who breathe a sigh of relief in the assurity we were spared that particular annihilation on that particular day, I have bad news for you - those 120 seconds in which the world stood at the precipice of Armageddon are still ticking by, because the same people responsible for almost causing a nuclear war between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. are still at work today.

I have no ambitions - be they money, power, public office, etc - driving me to do what I am doing. My only desire is to see the truth told so that the terrible story recounted in this book will never be repeated again.

Introduction

Where do we begin with something like this? We’re talking about the murder of thirty-four Americans by criminals in both the Israeli and US governments. A sane person can’t begin to understand it

all. It's like finding out your parents took a contract out on your life to collect the insurance and then when the assassins were caught, Mom and Pop came up with the bail money to spring them.

The attack on the *LIBERTY* was not an "incident" as described by Israel's supporters. An "incident" is something harmless, like accidentally bumping into someone. Rather, this was the planned murder of nearly 300 Americans, which if had gone off as planned, would have led to a nuclear war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

The attack on the *LIBERTY*, just like the assassination of JFK, is not just an isolated event of the past. There were and are repercussions - serious ones. 9/11 and the resulting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan being the most immediate of them. As of the moment of this writing, more than 5,000 of our sons and daughters serving in the U.S. Armed Forces are dead. Soldiers from other countries assisting the U.S. in fighting Israel's wars are dead as well. And finally, last but certainly not least, there are over a million civilian deaths in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, and Lebanon. All of this is the result of what took place June 8, 1967, when the government of Israel, working in collusion with US President LBJ and US Secretary of Defense Robert Strange McNamara, set the *USS LIBERTY* up to be sunk so that Egypt could be blamed. As a result of us being set up, the vampire known as Israel lives on stronger than anytime in history, courtesy of American taxpayers' money being misused by our so-called "elected" officials.

I've been cursed with the disease of "knowing" for the last forty-two years and there's nothing I can do about it, and with each passing day and each passing minute, my condition becomes even more terminal. I'm not talking about the scars from the physical wounds I sustained during the attack. Those heal.

Rather, it is the real wounds - the scars of the soul - that never heal. As seconds go by, I am closer to my grave where my story will go as well, and -before I draw my last breath, I want this disease - this unquiet of the mind - out of my system.

When I joined the U.S. Navy, I took an oath to protect the people of the United States from all enemies, foreign and domestic. The fact that I have received two honorable discharges from the armed services of the United States does not mean I have discharged myself from these duties to my beloved America, and that is why you are reading these words today.

No more magic shows. No more smoke and mirrors. No more rabbits being pulled from black hats by media wizards trying to create the illusion Israel is America's (or anyone's) friend. She is a dangerous animal. Quoting Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, the individual who ordered the attack on our ship that day, Israel is "...a mad dog, too dangerous to bother." Israel is out for blood, and - as the news makes plain every day - not just a few drops, but oceans of it.

Some may say I am going overboard with statements such as these, but I have seen the face of this devil in a manner up close and personal. I saw Israel's lust for blood that day and saw as well how she couldn't get her fill of it. I saw the frustration - no - the *rage* in her eyes when she was denied the chance of finishing all of us off that day. The Jewish state was and is like a vampire that must feed on human blood for her existence and she is willing to do anything necessary to get that blood.

Blood, just like in the veins of my beloved children, grandchildren, and people around the world. I know now they are in as much danger today as I was forty-two years ago. If this vampire is not stopped, they will find themselves in situations similar to the one that destroyed my peace of mind forty-two years ago and every day since. This vampire, raised out of the underworld, has been set loose upon mankind and is now almost impossible to control. Silver bullets don't work. Holy Water is useless. The only thing we have in our arsenal is the truth - the truth about what happened yesterday, what is taking place today and what will take place tomorrow if things don't change.

I don't believe things are cast in stone. There are higher powers at work besides the powers of hell that were unleashed upon us that day 42 years ago. By all accounts, we should have sunk as they had

planned, but God had different plans for us. He spared us for some reason, and I don't think it was because he thought we were all such great guys. He spared us for a mission, the mission of telling the world about the danger it faces from this creature known as Israel.

This danger is more serious than any plague faced by mankind, and as a God-fearing individual, it is my duty to warn the human race about this danger. Like some plague that has no cure, it seems that everything Israel touches dies. Ever since 1948, it has been nothing but murder, corruption and criminality.

I am certainly not the first one to warn mankind about the dangers of this creature. Others have done so throughout time and many lost their lives in the process. Where my testimony differs is that I personally experienced the dangerous nature of this creature on June 8th, 1967, as I watched my best friends being butchered like sheep before my eyes. Blown to pieces. Friends burned by napalm as if they were nothing more than hunks of chicken, beef and pork at some hellish barbeque.

They say time heals all wounds. That might be true for some, but for me, such is just pleasant fiction. Instead, time has caused these wounds to worsen and deepen. The nightmares are more vivid and more frequent. The anxiety never leaves me. Today, the pictures of death and butchery are clearer and more real than they were the day it happened.

I only hope that those reading this will walk away from it with the same sense of anger, duty and resolution I have. I want them to understand that everything they hold dear is as much endangered as if someone were holding a gun to the heads of their loved ones, because in fact that is what the situation truly is. The only difference in this case is that the "guns" we're talking about are thermo-nuclear weapons that will indeed go off if these vampires are not stopped. All mankind must understand their duty in driving a wooden stake through the heart of this vampire before we are all bled dry. It is no coincidence that in angel lore "Izrael" is the name given to the angel of death.

I have no doubt about the fact that the Jewish state has been seething and smoldering every day since June 8, 1967, when we escaped her clutches by the grace of God. Every minute we survivors have spent above ground has been a thorn in the eye of those who tried to murder us all that day. I know that if a button could be pushed that would end the lives of all the *LIBERTY* survivors, that button would be pushed with glee.

I hope that having read this heart-wrenching book you come away from it understanding that the assassination of thirty-four of America's beloved sons, (and the attempted assassination of 260 others) was not just merely an act of war on the people of America. It was an act of war on mankind. The land-grab and murder of innocent men, women and children in the Middle East that followed the attack on our ship only proves my words to be true.

If I sound bitter, it is because I am. Throwing up is never a pretty picture, and I have been holding my bile down for the past forty-two years. The only relief I can get from this pain is to get it out in the open and then to put as much distance between it and me as possible. My goal is to have all people of good will throughout the world read these words, come together as one and cause the truth - as beautiful and as bold as the morning sun - to shine down upon these vampires so that they will reap what they have sown.

The road I have traveled has taught me a lot. I have no regrets or reservations about telling as many people who will listen about the dangerous situation the world finds itself in - a situation existing solely for the benefit of Israel. All this death and destruction is being wrought by a beast with the blessing of the American government, while the American people are held captive by some kind of magic spell. The rewards for worshipping the beast are many - power, money, women, boys, fame, and many others on a list a mile-long. The devil smiles back at those who smile at him, but what the world needs to know is this: When the devil smiles, it is not funny, for death and destruction are soon to follow. That is the reason for this book.

I take no pleasure in unearthing such a terrible truth, just as I took no pleasure in almost being murdered on June 8, 1967. But it is our

duty as members of the human race, as parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc., to protect those little ones who cannot protect themselves.

I sincerely hope this true testimony will give the little defenseless ones some hope for a safer future.

August 12, 2009

Phillip Francis Tourney

Proud Survivor, USS LIBERTY

Attacked by the Air and Naval Forces of the State of Israel on June 8, 1967

Chapter 1--The Trail of Tears

I often heard my mother, a full-blooded Cherokee Indian born in a tee-pee on a reservation talk about something called the “The Trail of Tears”. I knew that this was when her country was invaded by a foreign power that turned her people into refugees, forcing them to flee hundreds of miles westward.

My own “Trail of Tears” began on June 8, 1967, and has lasted every day since. On that day, I - like my mother’s people - became a refugee. On that day I was forced to leave the safety of my country and relocate to a far-away place foreign to me. What happened is that the country I loved became something else - a creature I did not recognize or trust.

Generally speaking, your country is supposed to be a place of refuge from outside enemies, but for me, it became a place where my enemies had taken over.

My name is Phillip Francis Tourney, proud survivor of the *USS LIBERTY*, attacked by the state of Israel June 8th, 1967 and this is my story.

There are some destinies that cannot be avoided. For me, joining the Navy was one of them. Both my older brothers had joined, and so the thought of one day being part of that club was something as

natural to me as breakfast in the morning. Until my seventeenth birthday (when you could join with your parents' permission) I did my duty as a family member by working and helping Dad with his plastering business. Mom and Dad knew that as soon as I hit the big "one-seven" I was gone and they were fine with that. So literally, on my seventeenth birthday we headed down to the recruiting station where they signed the papers for me.

As soon as I put my John Hancock on the paper, they whisked me away for some physical tests right there in the same building. The navy doctor who examined me said I wouldn't make it through the physical. I was devastated to the point of tears. It was like watching the most beautiful girl I ever laid eyes on walk off arm-in-arm with another guy before I had even gotten the chance to take her out for a burger. I grabbed my clothes, put them back on and left the building.

Immediately after the test, Mom and Dad relocated to California where (as Dad hoped) business would be better. I went with them to help Dad out for two months, but it was no use. I simply had to be in the Navy, no matter what it took. I talked Dad into signing the papers again so I could try to enlist.

Thankfully, the U.S. government did not have computers back then, because I had to tell a little white lie when asked on the forms if I had ever enlisted in any other branch of the military previously but been denied. I was always scared to death that one day, out of the blue, some tough-as-nails Chief Petty Officer (equivalent of a Sergeant) would come up to me, yank me out of whatever training I was doing and send me home.

On Feb 6, 1964 I joined the Navy, retook the written exam and again passed it like a champ. This time however to my great relief I passed the physical with no problems. I was sworn in and officially became property of Uncle Sam.

Boot camp was only supposed to last eight weeks, but with Vietnam going on and no one wanting to wind up as a ground-pounder, young men were joining the Navy in droves. As a result, there were thousands of enlistees and boot camp was extended to

more than three months. I was stationed at the U.S. Navy Training center in San Diego, company 128.

Despite having had only limited schooling, they made me Educational Petty Officer in boot camp. Basically, I was a tutor for young men having trouble with their reading, writing and arithmetic. I was voted outstanding recruit by my peers and was awarded a certificate of the same by my commanding officer at completion of my boot camp training.

My first assignment was aboard *USS MANUA KEA, AE-22*, an ammunition ship based out of Port Chicago, California. Our job was to pick up ammo and other munitions at Port Chicago and bring them by sea to a variety of U.S. ships off the coast of Vietnam. It was like a flea market of sorts, because after we had unloaded our munitions, the other side would give us their cargo - the bodies of Americans killed in the war. We would then take these bodies on to the U.S. Naval base at Subic Bay, Philippines and from there they would be flown back to the U.S. We stacked the bodies like cord wood in green body bags, while trying as best we could to handle them with the dignity they deserved. We put them in the reefers (cold storage) where the food was kept.

While carrying the bodies, I could not help thinking to myself, "This is someone's son...this could be me." While aboard the *MANUA KEA* this was the first time I ever experienced death in an up-close and personal way and unfortunately it would not be the last time.

After finishing my tour with the *MANUA KEA*, she went into the yards and I was transferred clear across country to the *USS LIBERTY, AGTR-5*.

I had never heard of her before. She was stationed in Norfolk, Virginia, a long way from California. Upon arrival and seeing her for the first time, I was amazed at her appearance. I hadn't been in the Navy that long, but you didn't have to be to notice she was an odd-looking bird. Antenna were all over the place and she was a clean, sharp looking ship. The captain of the *LIBERTY* at the time was D.T. Wieland Jr. who held the rank of Commander. I found out years later that Commander Wieland went into a deep

depression when he found out what had happened to us, feeling he should have been there instead of McGonagle. After all, he had commissioned her and was a “plank owner”, something the U.S. Navy does to the first captain and crew of a ship who commissioned her. This means they “own” part of the ship and receive an official certificate stating this fact.

The first thing I noticed when coming onboard the *LIBERTY* was how easy-going everyone was, both officers and NCOs. My next thought was that I had hit the jackpot and that this was going to be a dream job.

I was half right.

I made my first cruise aboard the *LIBERTY* as a machinist’s mate in the engine room. I was trained in all forms of standing watch, which meant checking the gauges of everything in making sure everything was safe. Given the fact the engine room was a place of extremes in terms of temperatures and pressures, it had to be monitored regularly if accidents were to be prevented.

I made one cruise with Commander Wieland and then there was a changing of the guard. We were due for a new skipper, Commander William McGonagle who would be coming aboard. The ceremony inaugurating his taking command of the ship took place with all the pomp and circumstance associated with the U.S. Navy. As Commander Wieland departed the ship, a voice over the PA announced, “*USS LIBERTY* departing” and with that, McGonagle was now officially the captain of the *LIBERTY*.

After spending a year in the engine room, I requested a transfer to the ship-fitter’s shop, which was more to my liking for two reasons. First, it was more “hand’s on” type of work - welding and repairs, to be specific. Secondly, I would be out of the stifling heat of the engine room. It took a while for my request to go through the channels, so I had to stay in the engine room doing watches until someone else could take over my job.

Being part of ship's engineering, I was under the direct command of Lt. George Golden, Chief Engineering Officer. He was a southern gent of the stereotypical persuasion and demeanor. Under his direction, I requested to learn every kind of damage control there was, especially fire-fighting. Because his name sounded Jewish and he liked wearing a Star of David necklace, (only when we crossed the equator heading south) he was affectionately referred to by both enlisted men and officers as the "Smoky Mountain Jew", although religiously he was a Southern Baptist.

Part of the culture of the Navy was that as a "pollywog", (meaning someone who was the equivalent of a freshman in high school) you went through a hazing ceremony. As soon as the ship crossed the equator going south, the pollywogs had to go through initiation before they became "shellbacks". The ceremony would include crawling through garbage saved up specifically for this purpose. You would also go through the naval version of running the gauntlet where you were hit on the butt with paddles as you crawled on your hands and knees backwards through two rows of guys. You had to wear your clothes inside-out. It was all in good fun. And once it was over, it was over. You proudly wore the title of "shellback" and looked forward to it being your turn to do the same to new recruits.

Our duties always brought us to Africa. When we were back at port I took classes on damage control, which I loved. Our instructors were vets who had seen action in WWII and Korea. One instructor (whose name I can't remember now) had been at Pearl Harbor when it was attacked and who impressed upon me the idea that the most dangerous thing encountered on a ship is fire. Putting out fires was like doing surgery - do it right and you save yours and everyone else's life. Do it wrong and everyone dies.

In many respects, things aboard the *LIBERTY* were relaxed, and in other ways they weren't, and especially when it came to drilling. We drilled and drilled and drilled, and at all hours--midnight, 2:00 am, 4:00 am, or whenever. When you heard the order, "General Quarters", that meant you got your rear end moving and went to your battle stations without wasting time. We never knew when it was real or a drill, which was a good thing. I'm sure that this was at

least part of the reason why we survived out there on June 8, 1967 when we were attacked for almost two hours.

I asked what it was the *LIBERTY* did and the response was always the same: We “mapped the ocean floor”. Despite the fact I wasn’t the smartest kid on the block, I figured out in short time that this was just the official answer and knew there must have been much more to it than that. The fact that there were two different crews - the Communications Technicians (or “spooks” as we called them) and the ship’s company, led me to figure out in due time we were a spy ship of some sort.

The Communications Technicians (CTs) were a very secretive bunch. To the rest of us who were part of the ship’s crew, they seemed arrogant. Naturally, when you get guys like them and guys like us onboard the same ship, there is lots of confrontation. Their demeanor towards the ship’s crew was very condescending, one of “Your job is to take care of us and make our lives comfortable, period.” As an indicator of the kind of work they did, I never saw CTs dirty or dingy. There also was very little mingling between the regular crew and the CTs. The spaces where they worked were off limits to everyone, including - if it can be believed - the captain of the ship. What went on down there was secret and the rest of us dumb-asses were not privileged to know. On four occasions, I was sent to the CT spaces to do some welding and repairs and in each case was escorted by an armed guard who never took his eyes off me for a second. While down there I was told “Don’t look at anything, don’t talk to anyone. Do your job and get the hell out.” The first thing I noticed when going down there was that all the equipment was covered up with sheets.

Only one-third of the ship’s company were not CTs. The few times I went down into those spaces I felt like I was in a foreign country and was always relieved to get out of there. I knew that as a mechanic, I was as welcome down there as a janitor with a mop and bucket would be in an operating room where they were doing brain surgery. The CTs and the ship’s crew were like two different races of people. We in the crew knew that they were probably spies of some sort, but we did not know who or what they were spying on.

One of the few CTs I befriended was Phillip Tiedtke. We lifted weights together but never talked about his job. He was killed when the torpedo hit the CT spaces where he worked.

As I said, the job of the ship's company was to make the CTs as comfortable as possible and assist them in their mission of listening in on whatever it was they were sent to listen to. The West Coast of Africa was the main place we (they) were sent for routine monitoring.

On our missions to the West Coast of Africa, we would cruise up and down the coast at five or six knots (about eight miles per hour) day and night. In recent years I have at times asked some of the CTs why we always went to Africa and the common answer on their part has been that they couldn't talk about it. My best guess is that the atmospheric conditions in that part of the world were such that it was optimum for listening in on radio traffic, no matter where it was coming from, similar to how at nighttime you can pick up radio stations that you can't during the day.

Every month or so, we would pull into some African port to re-supply. We would buy food and fuel, and in the process help out the local farmers and merchants in those countries by buying the fruit of their labors. We would all get "liberty", meaning we were free to go on shore and do whatever we wanted for as long as we wanted since we were not on duty. It was up to us to report back in.

For us in the ship's crew, life was not the high-energy, high-intensity drama usually associated with the spy business. For us, life was pretty boring. In many ways. It was similar to the storyline of the movie *Groundhog Day* starring Bill Murray where everyday was just like the one before it with nothing new or exciting taking place.

After finishing my second tour onboard the *LIBERTY*, I was back in Virginia.

In early May of 1967, we received orders to head back out on what would be the fourth tour for the ship. As we were making

preparations to leave, we noticed some trouble with the Tresscomm - the big communications dish that bounced radio signals off the moon so as not to give away the ship's position. It was leaking hydraulic fluid. Captain wanted it fixed right away because he was eager to get moving.

Captain McGonagle was known as a "steamer", meaning he would rather be at sea than in port. Eager to get underway, he had some tech guys brought on board to try and fix the leaks in the dish. They patched it up as best as they could, given the short time frame in which they had to work, but the dish still leaked.

It was rough seas from Norfolk to Abidjan. In hindsight, this was obviously a bad omen for what was to come. The seas were high and the water was coming over the bow. Whatever it was I was doing at any particular time was interrupted periodically by me heading for the side of the ship so I could throw up into the Atlantic.

Once we hit Abidjan, some of us got "liberty" and headed for the Ivorian Hotel. We were in port for two days and everything was situation normal. Early one morning, as I sat in a bar with a few of my shipmates, the doors swung open and two Shore Patrolmen from the *LIBERTY* (basically cops for the ship) came in. They shouted out loud that all *LIBERTY* crewmen were to report to the ship immediately. Their demeanor was stern and urgent, something I had not seen before.

Being called back to the ship in such a hurry was unusual in itself, because when we got shore leave, we were basically on our own recognizance. I didn't know what was going on, but considering the fact that we were a spy ship, I knew it had to be related to this in some way.

Once onboard, we were all tasked with getting the ship ready. A somber mood crept over everyone as we made preparations. Not only had our shore leave been cut short, but also, given the fact our missions were generally uneventful, this new development and urgency spooked us all.

Lt. Golden, the engineering officer, told us we were headed out to sea. We had heard on the radio there was something going on at that time in the Middle East between Israel - America's "ally" - and the Arabs.

Despite the fact the seas were calm, the trip towards Rota, Spain was rough because of the hurry we were in to get there. We ran at full-speed (around 18 knots) for eight days, until June 1st.

We arrived at the U.S. Naval station in Rota, Spain. We picked up supplies and more importantly, four newcomers - three marine linguists and one civilian, Alan Blue who worked for the National Security Agency.

As an indicator that our collective sixth sense was working overtime and telling us that something bad was approaching, tensions amongst the ship's crew were high. Everyone was agitated - snapping and barking at each other for relatively small things. Sometime around noon the next day after picking up our supplies in Rota, we were on our way, passing by the Rock of the Gibraltar and then, as Lt. Golden had promised, out to sea.

In making the approximately 2,300-mile trip across the Mediterranean, we did about 18 knots. There was a headwind against us of about 30 or 40 knots, almost as if some higher power was trying to keep us away from our destination. Along the way, we saw three Soviet destroyers that kept about 6,000 yards distance between us and them. The seas going across the Mediterranean were calm, but we made them rough by putting the pedal to the metal as we were. The water sprayed us constantly as we heaved up and down in our hasty trip.

We knew we were headed into a war zone and so Captain McGonagle asked for an armed escort (a destroyer of all things) but was denied his request. The official explanation from Washington was that there was nothing to fear - the *LIBERTY* was a U.S. flag ship and the flag we proudly flew was our protective shield. After all, we were America, and the last country that picked a fight with us on December 7, 1941 paid for it severely.

As we approached the war zone, the crewmembers of the *LIBERTY* were rooting for Israel, hoping she would wallop her Arab enemies. Obviously not knowing what was to come, we showed our support for the Jewish state by making Israeli flags of different sizes, some small, some large, and placing them all over the place.

How could we have known any better? It was, after all, only about twenty years since WWII was over, and growing up in America, we had all gotten a heavy dose of how badly these people had been treated. How could we not root for poor, seemingly defenseless Israel?

Officially, the *LIBERTY* was under the control of Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Atlantic Fleet, Adm. John McCain, father of none other than U.S. Senator and one-time presidential candidate, John McCain. We learned years later that several days before the attack, the command was taken away from Admiral McCain and transferred directly to the Joint Chiefs of Staff encompassing a relatively small number of people. The reason for this is obvious: With only a small handful of people in the loop, it would be easier to keep secrets as opposed to it being part of the U.S. Atlantic fleet, where literally, thousands of people were involved.

Despite being assured we were safe, the unease amongst the crew remained. It was not just the rough-n-rowdy enlisted men who had a bad feeling in their guts about the mission, but the officers as well. They were harder, sharper, more direct, less patient, and just plain antsy. They had always drilled us a lot anyway, but now they drilled us a hell of a lot more and paid attention to every detail. No mistakes were tolerated. Basically, all the drills we in damage control did on a regular basis in dealing with the after effects of an attack were stepped up considerably. We drilled in plugging holes in the ship's skin that might be created because of rocket and cannon fire. We drilled in shoring up bulkheads in case we had been hit by a torpedo. We drilled in putting out fires of any sort. It was almost as if guardian angels were forewarning us about what we would be dealing with a few days later when we would be attacked by the angel of death, Israel.

On June 4th, Israel launched her sneak attack on the Arabs. We heard about it on the radio. The fast pace of the war and what appeared would be an easy victory for Israel led us to believe it would all be over soon.

We learned later there was already another spy ship in the area, the *USS Valdez*. Like the *USS LIBERTY*, the *Valdez* was tasked with receiving and then re-transmitting intelligence signals back to NSA. Where it differed from the *LIBERTY* however, is that it was for the most part manned by civilians working for the NSA. Technically speaking, they were not sailors but contractors. We learned later that the *Valdez*, despite the fact she was already there and basically capable of doing the same job the *LIBERTY* could do, was ordered to leave and make room for us.

After many years, this puzzle concerning the *Valdez* seems to have been solved, at least as far as I'm concerned. Anyone wanting to mobilize the American people into supporting a war against Israel's enemies would have much greater success doing so with slogans such as "Remember the *USS LIBERTY*" rather than "Remember the *Valdez*." The *Valdez*, for all its worth, simply did not have the sex appeal that the name "*LIBERTY*" did.

When June 7th came around, the weather turned in our favor. Mother Nature's wet, windy, temperamental mood suddenly changed and was replaced with beautiful, clear, calm skies. Although we did not know it at that time, it was to be the calm before the storm.

One of the things we noticed right away as we neared our destination was that ships of all sorts - tankers, cargo ships and just about every other thing you could imagine - were all headed in the opposite direction, as if they were fleeing the area. Despite this bad omen, our jittery, antsy mood had changed to one of excited invincibility, because our American flag - our force field - was waving high where it could not possibly go unnoticed, and no one was going to get on the bad side of the red, white and blue.

The evening of June 7th, we wrapped up our 6,000 mile trip as we approached the Gaza Strip. For all intents and purposes the war

between the Jewish state and the Arabs was a done deal, although we could still hear and see the leftovers taking place on the horizon.

The *LIBERTY* was a converted merchant marine cargo ship of the *Victory* class from WWII. They were often referred to as “one-wayers” because if they were hit by a torpedo, they went down fast. I thought about this as we approached the coast of Gaza, as well as the fact that I used to watch the old *Victory At Sea* movies where I had seen so many of these ships similar to ours sink like a rock. As a kid, I loved watching the old *Victory At Sea* movie reels and always wondered what it would be like to be on a ship that got torpedoed.

We later learned that a warning had been sent out by the Joint Chiefs of Staff that we were to remain at least 100 miles away from the conflict. We only learned of this order well after the fact for the simple reason we never received it. Considering the fact we were basically a giant floating radio station, there is little chance that we “missed” it. We could pick up anything from anywhere around the world and especially something as important as a radio transmission from the Joint Chiefs.

Part of our drilling included manning the gun tubs and the lookout towers. The guns were nothing as far as modern warfare at sea went. There were four .50 caliber machine guns which were useful only in repelling would-be boarders. As far as being effective against other vessels, it was like shooting a grizzly bear with a pellet rifle.

The morning of June 8th, I was awake at 3:30 am, because I had watch duty. My job was Sounding and Security, which included making sure all tanks of potable water were good and checking for water-tight integrity of the ship. I would report to the bridge every hour on the hour with the news that all was okay.

Once daybreak arrived, we started receiving visitors in the form of overflights of our ship. I did not see the initial flights, because I was below deck doing my job, but the other guys were telling me about them. The planes were unquestionably Israeli, as the Star of David

was easy to see and knowing that our “friends” were checking on us caused the general mood to improve dramatically.

The way the guys described them, these surveillance planes were low and slow. It was not possible for them to mistake the fact we were Americans and therefore the general belief amongst the crew was that Washington and Tel Aviv were working together to make sure we were safe. I did not see all the planes, but the other guys said the over-flights lasted approximately six hours. Around noon, the flights stopped altogether.

I went to lunch around noon. Soon afterwards, a General Quarters drill was announced over the intercom. Captain wanted a chemical drill done, which meant me crawling into what was called an “impregnated” suit. I grabbed my fire-hose and nozzle and made my way to the main deck, pretending to wash down any chemicals on the ship. The heat inside that suit was enough to make me woozy to the point where I thought I would pass out. Somewhere around 1:45 pm, (just a few minutes before I would no doubt have keeled over) the drill was done. I crawled out of the suit and put it away.

Damage Control Central hailed me and informed me that one of the phones in the starboard gun-mount on the forecastle (pronounced “foaxal”) was not working. David Skolak, another engineer like myself, accompanied me to the gun-mount where the broken phone was located. I told him what needed to be done and his response was, “No problem, Tourney. I’ll get her working.” This was about five minutes before 2:00 pm.

We stood there for a few minutes near the gun-mount, shooting the bull. One of the things we both remarked on was that of all the places we would not want to be during an attack, this was it; the gun-tub. We knew that in any attack, the gun-tub (as well as the guy manning it) would get taken out as a first priority. We fought back the shivers associated with this discussion by reminding ourselves and each other that everything was okay. We were Americans and Israel was our ally. Therefore, anyone becoming aggressive with us would immediately be crushed by our good friends, the Israelis; just as your buddy would step in and start throwing punches if you were jumped by two or three guys.

I had to get back to my work station, so I said goodbye to Skolak and the gunner. I made my way down the starboard ladder to the main deck, and then on to my workstation in the ship-fitter's shop on the starboard side. I opened the hatch to go back inside. As soon as I stepped in and closed the hatch, I heard an order announced over the PA to test the motor whale boat.

A mere few moments after the order had been given I heard a huge explosion right next to the hatch I had just closed. The only logical explanation in my mind was that whoever was carrying out the order to test the motor whale boat had done something wrong and the boat had blown up as a consequence.

The idea that we were under attack was the farthest thing from my mind.

Chapter 2 --Those Arab Bastards...

Not realizing that a rocket had just exploded directly outside the hatch, I grabbed the handle and opened it once more to go out and investigate the trouble. I had just barely put one foot outside, when I felt myself grabbed by the shirt collar and violently jerked back inside. I turned and saw it was First-Class Petty Officer Dale Neese.

"Get back!" he barked, "We're under attack!"

General Quarters alarm was sounded. I made my way to my duty station, which was one deck above the mess decks. After going down the ladder, I slipped and fell and found myself under the trampling feet of sailors as they made their way to their stations. I rolled over to my right side to get out of their way, got on my feet and joined the stampede to get to my station as well. I got into battle-dress and got my gear ready.

Chief Thompson was the on-scene leader. As soon as I arrived, he said he'd been hit and was leaving to get medical care. Since I was assistant on-scene leader, this meant I was in charge.

“It’s all yours now, Tourney,” Thompson said as he made his way down the passage, and I, not in the least bit thrilled with my new promotion yelled back “Hey, thanks a lot chief.”

I began my duties by making sure all persons in damage control party were accounted for and ready to do business. Several were missing which was not surprising, considering the torrent of explosions I could hear taking place just one deck above me. Suddenly - just like the “thousand points of light” George Bush Sr. described in one of his infamous campaign speeches - holes began appearing everywhere around us from the rocket and cannon fire as they struck the side and deck of the ship, allowing in sunlight where before there was none. I caught a piece of shrapnel four inches long, just above the elbow on my right arm. I pulled it out, threw it on the deck and moved everyone in my department to the main deck.

Once on the main deck, we were not prepared for what we were about to see. The first place I went was to the same gun-tub I had visited earlier. I saw nothing but a pile of human remains - blood, hunks of flesh and fragments of bone. One of the men in my department, Rick Aimetti - or as I called him, “my partner in crime” - was with me. We knew there was no life to be saved at the gun-tub, so we moved on. All the while, machine-gun bullets and rocket fire are raining down on us.

Dead and wounded bodies were everywhere on the main deck. In between volleys of machine gun bullets and rockets we darted out from safe cover, grabbed them one at a time, dragged them across the deck and threw them down the hatch. Others down below picked them up and took them someplace where they could be treated. It took us about fifteen minutes to clear the decks of those who were alive and could be saved.

All totaled, there had been about twenty-five guys up there who had been hurt and needed help. I think the worst case I saw was Tom Riley, a Boatswain’s Mate. He was on his back, alert, and covered head to toe with grey paint. Considering the number of wounds he had sustained, the paint--as thick as cold molasses--

probably saved his life as it was that day as it served as a giant bandage.

Once Aimetti and I assessed that there was no one else alive on the main deck, I was ordered to go to the log room, the location of Damage Control Central. When I got there I saw that John Scott, my superior, was burning documents. This is standard procedure in the U.S. Military, as all documents - no matter how seemingly insignificant they are - must be destroyed in the event of an attack. You do not allow your enemy to get any information on anything, and who else but an enemy would be attacking us? After speaking for a few minutes, he ordered me back on deck to assess the damage and to put out any fires.

On my way back to the deck, I saw the passageways were littered with wounded men. All were bloody and moaning. My shipmates would call out to me and ask me for help.

Some of them would ask me, as if I were a doctor, "Hey, man, can you do something about this?"

I got to the bridge and saw that Captain McGonagle was badly wounded in the leg but still in command. Rocket and cannon holes were everywhere. Burning napalm was dripping through the holes and into the bridge compartment. I tried hitting the napalm with the CO2 canisters I had, but the fire was so intense, that the CO2 was basically useless. I requested a fire team with water hoses. In hindsight, I realize this was just a waste of time, since the hoses had been shot up like a snake hit with birdshot from a shotgun.

I threw the two empty CO2 canisters overboard and then told Captain McGonagle I would be back with some better equipment to put out the fires. His response to me was, "Do what you can, sailor." Despite the fact we were under attack and he was badly wounded, Captain was calm and professional in a surreal way.

Before I left, I looked at my good friend, Francis Brown - a Third-Class Quartermaster, who was steering the ship. We were good friends. We drank beer together, played cards and whatnot. We

stood there for a moment, not saying a word but simply locking eyes.

I went to find more CO2 canisters. As soon as I got a hold of one, I flew back up the port ladder to get to the bridge. When I got to the top, I stepped in something wet, causing me to slip and fall on my back violently. The CO2 canister flew out of my hands and came crashing down with a bang that caused everyone, including McGonagle, to look in my direction.

As soon as I got up, I saw what it was that had caused me to slip and fall. My good friend, Francis Brown had caught a machine gun bullet or a piece of shrapnel in the back of the head and his blood was everywhere. His eyes were closed but his face was swelled up like a balloon. It was something that no human being should ever have to see and especially when it is your good friend.

My first thought when seeing this was “Those Arab bastards, they just blew my friend to pieces...”

Chapter 3--Rude Awakening

How could I have thought otherwise? Who else besides the Arabs could have done something like this? The Russians wouldn't do it - they would have been evaporated and knew it. Israel, our “beloved ally,” wouldn't do it.

That left only the Arabs, who had just gotten their clocks cleaned by Israel and this meant naturally they would be unhappy with America. In the instant of that one thought, I figured this was their last gasp, their last stroke on the way out. Here we were, a defenseless ship and an easy target. It would be like a turkey-shoot for them, giving them a trophy to hang on the wall and talk about years later in order to lessen the sting of what was such a terrible, humiliating loss.

The other reason leading me to conclude it was the Arabs was that the jets attacking us were not marked. The only other encounter we had had with planes was earlier in the day when we were being

surveilled by Israel, and those planes had clearly been marked with the tell-tale Star of David.

Our beautiful ship, *LIBERTY*, that less than an hour before was a flawless, spectacular, elegant vessel was now a giant block of metal Swiss cheese with body-parts of American servicemen strewn all over the deck. What had been battleship-grey before was now stained blood-red and I had just fallen on my back when I slipped in a puddle of it.

I got back on my feet and with little or no effect, spent the last of the CO2 I had on the burning napalm. My job was done on the bridge. There was nothing more I could do. Before leaving, I gave the bridge one final look.

Hopelessness overcame me like a flood of nausea. As I went back down the ladder, I again noticed my shipmates lying on the deck in the passageway.

They were bleeding, with broken legs, broken arms, broken heads and jagged bones sticking out all over the place. I wondered how long it would be before I either joined them or -- worse -- joined those who had already gone on to meet their Maker.

I made my way back to Damage Control Central where my boss, Ensign Scott was still burning documents. I told him I was heading back on to the battlefield to see what I could do in keeping the ship afloat and helping the wounded. He merely continued with the business of burning documents as if I were a ghost.

Having seen the destructive power we were up against first-hand and knowing we had nothing to throw back at it, my instinct was to go and help the wounded. I went to sick bay first -- a logical expectation, except when you consider that it was adequate for only a handful of men. When I arrived I saw that Richard Kiepfer (the ship's only doctor) was not there, learning that the more seriously wounded had been moved to the mess decks, since they could hold large numbers of men there. Knowing Doc would be where I needed to be, I left sick bay and headed for the mess decks.

Mess hall was the meeting place for good times. We ate there, had coffee, played cards, watched movies, told jokes and whatnot. Just like back home, where the dining room was the place where the family gathered together every evening to celebrate the fact they had all made it through one more day alive together, we on the *LIBERTY* would gather in the mess hall. Getting together in the mess hall at the end of the work day was our way of celebrating the fact we were one day closer to getting home.

Now however, the mess hall was anything but a friendly meeting place. Rather, it has been transformed into a cacophony of wailing and desperation. It was - to put it bluntly - a slaughterhouse, and we, the men of the *USS LIBERTY*, were the beef. Above deck, it had been the sound of roaring jets, rockets exploding and machine-gun bullets whizzing by.

Below deck, the sounds were just as horrible, meaning the noises of men in indescribable agony. Again, because I was one of the few men still on his feet, the wounded would stop me by the way and ask me to help them. As much as it was against everything in my being, I had to put them out of mind for a while, because right then my job was to move the wounded out of the passageways and into the mess hall.

Rick Aimetti and I went up top to check and see if there were any on deck still alive and with half a chance of being saved. All of them - I can't give an exact number, but I can guess at least half a dozen - were dead, so we left them there. We later learned that the final count was 9 dead bodies on the deck.

At last, the jets realized they would not succeed in sinking us. They called off their attack and left. Before we could breathe a sigh of relief however, the voice of Captain McGonagle came over the intercom, ordering the ship's crew to prepare for torpedo hit, starboard side.

I looked out to see the torpedo boats coming at us at a high rate of speed. Unlike the jets, the torpedo boats were proudly flying their flag with its tell-tale Star of David. When I saw the flag and the

high rate of speed at which they were coming at us, I breathed a sigh of relief.

Foolishly, I assumed that our beloved ally had scared off the jets and were coming to our rescue.

The delusion lasted for only a minute until I saw the splash of several torpedoes being dropped in the water as they headed towards us. Unable to find a big enough vein during the first time with the air assault, the vampire now moved to a different part of our neck, searching out the jugular.

Putting the two pieces of information together - the fact we were being attacked and murdered by our “ally” is difficult to describe. Betrayal is always a heartbreaking event and especially when it’s coming from someone really close to you.

I could make no sense of it. Why would a friend do this to us? We had all been pulling for Israel all along. We wanted them to win, and their payback for our loyalty to them was to try to murder us - *all of us*. There was no warning - nothing to indicate that such a thing was coming our way. It was much like Judas, who betrayed his friend with a kiss.

I can’t speak for the rest of the crew, because I can’t read their minds, but for me, the knowledge that this had been done by a friend filled me with seething rage. I was determined to do whatever was necessary and at whatever cost to save the ship in whatever way I could. For whatever reason, knowing we had been betrayed by a friend made me stronger.

As angry as I was at that time however, it would be nothing compared to the anger I would experience later when I learned the terrible truth that we were betrayed not only by Israel, but also by others even closer to home.

The torpedoes had all been launched almost simultaneously. No doubt, our would-be assassins assumed the damage we had sustained by their air attack had wounded us to the point that we were merely a sitting duck. What they did not count on was the

skill of our captain as he out-smarted the killers and out-manuevered their torpedoes.

Four passed us by, leaving one.

In our heads, the countdown began as that fifth torpedo approached. I was on the starboard side, which was only one deck above the waterline. As we had been trained to do, we hunkered down in “torpedo attack mode”. This meant bending your knees and elbows, putting your hands against the bulk head and relaxing your neck. This last action is nearly impossible knowing that death is approaching.

As I crouched there, waiting for the explosion, I remembered the *Victory at Sea* movies I watched as a kid. I was sure we would blow up and sink to the bottom like a rock. My talk with God was short but sweet - “Lord, if this is the way it’s gotta be, then it’s gotta be. I’m sorry if I ever disappointed you...”

The seconds peeled away like minutes, as I waited for the blast.

When the explosion came, it was literally deafening. Being directly above it by a mere eight feet, my eardrums were blown out, something I live with to this day as a reminder of what happened. Although my feet remained on the floor at the same time I was airborne. We all were, because the ship was picked completely up out of the water by the explosion. When it came back down it bounced like a ball that had been tossed onto the pavement.

Now, with what I had left of my hearing, I could hear new sounds. There was moaning and groaning and wailing; not of wounded men but rather of a wounded ship as metal gave way to the rush of sea water within the compartment directly below. That the ship had not blown up meant the torpedo had not hit the engine room. If it had and all that cold sea water had hit the boiler running at full bore, we would have gone up like a stick of dynamite.

The ship settled and then started to list. It seemed impossible that she would not go down, but miraculously, (and I do mean *miraculously*) she steadied herself.

I was a twenty-year-old kid in charge of Damage Control Forward, on a ship that had just suffered (at least) 75% casualties. I had no communications, so my only way of getting my orders was to speak personally with my superior, Ensign Scott in Damage Control Central. After locating him and asking what I was to do he instructed me to go find out where the torpedo had hit. So I, along with Rick Aimetti, went down into the bowels of the ship to the Communications Spaces, where the spooks worked.

When we arrived, I banged on the steel door with my fire ax. The lock on the door was electronic and required a code to open it which I obviously did not have. On the other side of the door, a voice told me I was not authorized to enter the spaces. Rick Aimetti and I told whoever it was to go to hell, saying that being in damage control meant that in an emergency we were authorized to go anywhere we needed to on the ship. When this didn't succeed in persuading whoever was on the other side, I threatened that if they did not open up I would beat the door off its hinges with my ax.

The door opened.

Since I had been down in the spaces before doing grunt work for the spooks, I knew the lay of the land. The main hatch was sealed, along with the scuttle hatch. I turned the scuttle hatch counterclockwise, *very slowly*, since the compartment had just had a hole blown in the side of it and might already be filled with water. As I slowly turned, I heard air escaping in our direction, meaning the compartment was not filled already, but was filling.

I continued opening the hatch slowly, when to my surprise, I heard frantic banging on the other side. Knowing there was life on the other side, I turned the wheel as fast as I could, and threw the hatch open. As soon as it was opened, Sgt. Bryce Lockwood, USMC, came scrambling out while pulling another sailor to safety. Aimetti and I grabbed the two and yanked them out of the hole. At this point, Lockwood, (thinking we had locked him in there and left him to die) turned on both us with understandable fury, calling us a couple of dirty, no-good SOBs.

Just then, Ensign Scott entered, carrying a battle lantern and ordered me to give him my belt. I did as he told, at which point he tied my belt around the handle and lowered the lantern into the water to check for any signs of life. After a few silent moments, we looked at each other.

“What do you think, Tourney?” he asked.

My response was as short as my prayer had been earlier when I thought I was a dead man for sure.

“Sir,” I said, “I think we’d better seal her up.”

And we did.

Aimetti and I left the area. Little did we know that a new phase of the war against our lives had just begun. We climbed back up to the main deck, just to make sure there were no more survivors waiting to be rescued. To our shock, it turned out there were men alive on deck. As before, we grabbed them and threw them into any hatch, corner, or anything that appeared to offer some type of protection for them as they fought to stay alive.

Now, instead of the jets firing at us with machine-guns, it was the gunners onboard the torpedo boats. They shot at anything that moved; firefighters or stretcher bearers. It seemed to last forever. One of the guys I was pulling to safety got hit right above the knee with a .50 caliber, resulting in an explosion of blood and bone. I took off my shirt and tied the sleeves around the top of his leg as tight as I could get it to stop the bleeding. We got him down to the mess decks and untied the tourniquet for just a few seconds so that they wouldn’t be forced to amputate his leg later. Then we retied it and left the area.

Aimetti and I went back up on the main deck, still under fire from the gunners on the torpedo boats. Now, not only were they shooting at the firefighters and stretcher bearers, but at the waterline as well, right in the direction of the boilers and from no further than thirty-five yards away. It was obvious to me what they

were trying to do. They were trying to blow up the ship by hitting the boilers.

Throughout the entire time that they were firing at anything that moved, they circled the ship like vultures. There was no way, from such a close distance (less than 100 feet) that they could have missed the lettering, *USS LIBERTY GTR-5*, as big as 10 feet in height. They were English words written in the Latin Alphabet. Not Arabic - as they would later claim making up the excuse that they had thought we were a rickety Egyptian horse freighter, the *El Quesir*. This very same Egyptian freighter had been tied up in port during the time of the attack, and Israel had most certainly known this already.

The sound of machine-guns and all the rest of the hell taking place at that moment was interrupted by a new order from the Captain,

“ALL CREW PREPARE TO ABANDON SHIP.”

Obviously he thought we were going under, as the ship was still listing badly to the starboard side where the torpedo had hit.

When we started our voyage from Norfolk we had enough life rafts for 294 crewmembers. Now however, most of the life rafts had been destroyed by rockets, gunfire or napalm. Now there were only three left and large enough to hold as many as a dozen men each. I personally jettisoned one of them into the water and watched as all of them inflated. Just a few minutes later, though, I saw them being machine-gunned by the Israeli gunners. In something that causes my blood to boil to this very day, I watched in horror as one of the destroyed rafts was taken aboard a torpedo boat as a trophy, while the other two were sunk.

These life rafts were put over the side to evacuate our most seriously wounded, and the gunning of these life rafts was a war crime. When I saw them being shot to pieces, I knew there was no hope for the crew of the *USS LIBERTY*. Israel clearly understood the meaning of the phrase “dead men don’t tell tales” and was not about to allow even one of us to live and tell our story.

The gunfire from the torpedo boats stopped, and the only explanation I can offer for this is that the rotten bastards ran out of ammo.

The nightmare of the torpedo boats left, only to be replaced by another one.

Chapter 4--Staring Into The Eyes Of The Devil

Dad was a Baptist and Mom was Catholic. In the end, Mom's way of thinking won out, and I was baptized a Catholic at the church dedicated to St. Francis De Salles, from whom I got my middle name. I remember Mom taking me to Mass, and although I did not understand any of the strange language being used, I knew it was a house of God and a place of holiness.

I remember the stained-glass windows with their depictions of various things. One picture that always stuck in my mind was one of Michael the Archangel; standing triumphant over the devil and about to thrust a spear into him.

The image of the devil was one that always stuck with me, with his horns, tail, smiling eyes and pitchfork. I thought - and always hoped - that I would never see him face to face. I certainly never thought he would appear in any other form than how I had seen him in that stained glass window as a child. But on June 8, 1967, I came face-to-face with him, as well as his fellow fallen angels who tried to kill me that day.

First it was the jet aircraft and then the torpedo boats. Now came a new vessel carrying his henchmen. I heard it at first from far away, despite the fact that my eardrums had been blown out by the blast of the torpedo.

Far off in the distance came the unmistakable "whomp, whomp, whomp" sound of a troop-carrying helicopter. It was approaching the ship from the starboard side, the same side where the torpedo had hit. Soon, I saw what I had heard, as the helicopter appeared just above the horizon and approached us like a bird of prey.

As the helicopter approached, a call came over the intercom:

“ALL SHIP’S PERSONNEL PREPARE TO REPEL BOARDERS.”

This meant there was going to be a firefight.

Although it was not part of my duty to hand out the few small arms we had on the ship, I made my way to the gun locker as fast as I could, along with Aimetti. Both of us, having seen our friend Francis Brown with his head blown open were filled with such a rage that we could envision nothing better than delivering a little payback to those who had killed him.

I could do nothing to stop the jets, with their rockets, napalm and .50 caliber machine-guns. I could do nothing in fighting back against the torpedo boats. But by God, if it was going to be a man-to-man fight with whoever was onboard that helicopter, then I was going to try and make up for lost time. I ran down to the gun locker with Aimetti only to find it locked up tighter than Fort Knox. The master at arms, the only one with a key to the locker was no where to be found. Considering the high numbers of dead and wounded, we figured he had to be among them.

The locker was not that big - only about four feet wide, four feet deep and six feet high. Nor were our war machines that impressive - some old WWII-era M1 Garands, some .45 pistols and a few 12 gauge shotguns. Nevertheless, we were desperate for something to fight back with, even if it were only a BB gun. Someone (I can’t remember who - it may even have been me) grabbed an ax and started beating the lock on the locker. It yielded nothing. The lock was beaten to death but it would not give.

We left the area, unarmed and just as defenseless as we had been earlier when the jets and torpedo boats attacked.

As the helicopter hovered over us at about fifty feet above the deck, I could see that my worst suspicions had been proven correct. This was not a rescue helicopter. Instead, like a hornet-swollen hive,

there were commandos on board, special forces, armed with sub-machineguns used for close-quarter combat.

I knew immediately they were not here to give us help. They were here to finish what their fellow assassins had been unable to accomplish. They were going to murder the entire crew of the *USS LIBERTY*. Then, once we were all dead and they were free to move about as they pleased, they would place explosives in strategic areas of the ship, detonate them and sink us all. The perfect crime, leaving no witnesses.

As the helicopter hovered for a moment, I saw that the troops inside were preparing to board the ship. From no more than 75 feet away, I stood like a dumb-ass in an open doorway where they had a clear shot at me. I locked eyes with one of my would-be assassins who was sitting on the floor of the helicopter. His legs were hanging out, and he had one foot on the skid below as he waited for the order to rappel down to the ship's deck and finish us all off.

I stepped out of the hatch and stood on the deck of my battered and bloody ship. I thought about everything that had happened over the course of the last hour or so. My good friend, Francis Brown, his brains splattered all over the bridge...David Skolak, who was left in chunks of flesh, bone and internal organs...and all the other men, whom I had never gotten to meet or know, and who were now gone forever.

And so, the only thing I could do in that moment in letting my killers know what I thought about what they had done to my ship, to my friends and to my country, was to give them the finger. The one Israeli with whom I had locked eyes, merely chuckled at the sight of something as impotent and harmless as my middle finger and in the midst of all his machine gun-toting buddies, he simply smiled and gave me the finger back.

Suddenly, without any apparent reason or warning, the helicopter hauled ass out of there like a vampire being exposed to sunlight. The sight of them scurrying off sent a wave of euphoria through the crew.

I continued my search for the living. I made my way towards the boatswainmates' sleeping quarters at the front of the ship. As I entered the quarters, it was pitch black. The only light I had was a battle lantern. I moved the light from corner to corner when all of the sudden, I saw someone lying under a rack. My first thought was that he was dead, but to my great relief and surprise he wasn't. I asked him if he was okay. He said he was. I told him to get his ass up and out of here because we needed every able-bodied man to help with the wounded. He lay there as if I had said nothing. I repeated my order for him to get his ass up and help us, this time using a few choice words that would have gotten my mouth washed out by my mom had I said them as a boy. I moved towards him, intent upon grabbing him by the collar and hauling him out of the quarters, when suddenly he pulled out a pistol, pointed it directly at me and announced his version of things - "I ain't goin' nowhere with you."

When I saw the pistol and heard what he said, I knew he was not kidding. I thought to myself, "I survived rockets, machine guns, napalm and five torpedoes and now I am going to get killed by this cowardly son of a bitch who just so happens to be one of my own shipmates." I backed away a few steps and said, "okay." Slowly, I made my way out of the compartment, keeping the light on his eyes. When I got past the hatch, I closed it, making a special mental note that I would deal with him later when he did not have me at such a disadvantage.

I learned later that a mere few weeks earlier, this same guy had pulled a gun on someone else, but for reasons I do not know.

I left the area just as frightened as I had been when the ship was under attack. He could have shot me dead and no one would ever have been the wiser. There were guys all over the ship with bullet holes in them, and one more wasn't going to result in any kind of autopsy or ballistics study concluding I was killed by "friendly" fire. More than a week later when we were in Malta doing repairs on the ship, I sat down to write this guy up, for the simple reason that he was dangerous. Over the course of an hour, I categorized everything that took place - disobeying a direct order from a superior, dereliction of duty and threatening to do me bodily harm

with a firearm. I was meticulous in my account, even using a dictionary to make sure all the words were spelled correctly. The space on the chit was too small to cover everything, so I finished the report on the back of the paper. I turned it into one of my immediate superiors whose name I will not disclose because of the enormous respect I have for him. He read it over thoroughly and we discussed the matter for about a half an hour. At the end of our discussion, my superior - being much wiser to the ways of the world than I was - took my report and tore it into two pieces, then into four, then eight, and on and on until the only thing remaining was confetti.

“I believe every word you said, Tourney,” he told me, “but the fact is, we can’t do this, because if we do, it’s going to erupt into an issue that none of us needs to deal with right now.”

Years later, I ran into this guy at a reunion of *USS LIBERTY* vets. I confronted him with his crime, asking him if he remembered pulling the gun on me. He obviously did remember, as he was hemming and hawing and squirming uncomfortably in front of me and a few of the other guys. Despite the fact he denied everything, he packed up and headed out just a few minutes later. I have not seen or heard from him since then.

Being in charge of damage control, I was free to go anywhere I wanted on the ship. For whatever reason, I wanted to check on Capt. McGonagle and see if they had taken care of my friend Francis Brown properly. When I got there, Francis was gone and McGonagle was standing upright with a tourniquet on his leg. No sooner had I gotten there when I heard someone shout, “Helicopter approaching from starboard side sir!”

Sure enough, here comes another damned helicopter with Israeli markings, and in my mind, loaded again with SOB’s wanting us all dead. It arrived and like the one before, hovered above us. From above, I could see Aimetti on the main deck below. A sack was dropped from the helicopter that landed on the main deck next to him. He picked it up and brought it to the bridge. Inside the bag was an orange along with a card from Commander Ernest Castle, the American Naval Attaché for the U.S. Ambassador to Israel.

Handwritten on the back of his card was a single line: *“Have you casualties?”*

Upon reading the card, McGonagle became furious. He limped out of the enclosed part of the bridge to the wing and yelled, “Get out of here! We don’t want any help from you!”

I understand why Captain was so furious. Here was this helicopter hovering above our once pristine, beautiful ship, now riddled with holes. There’s blood all over the place, the deck is covered with body parts as far as the eye could see, and this idiot asks something as inane as, “Have you casualties?”

The helicopter left, marking the end of Israel’s military assault on our ship. We had defeated the beast without firing a single shot, merely by staying alive and remaining afloat.

Chapter 5--Broken Men, Broken Hearts

Once the helicopter left, Captain gave orders to head out to deeper waters. Praying that we would no longer be dealing with any further attempts on our lives, we got busy trying to save those who had been wounded.

The task at hand now was to find a place to put all the wounded. They were packed as tight as sardines in a tin can, leaving little room for us to even walk around. It was a sea of casualties - bleeding head wounds...bones protruding from arms and legs.

One guy I’ll never forget was a fellow named Quintero. As he lay on one of the dining tables, I stopped by to check on him. To my horror, I saw that he had taken a .50 caliber machine-gun bullet that had run along the top of his head from the front to the back, digging a trench into the top of his skull. He was alert, and we talked a few minutes. I asked him if there was anything I could get for him - some water or anything to make him more comfortable. He lifted up his hand to reveal he was missing his thumb, as if to say, “If you happen to see this thing lying around, pick it up for me.”

Since we were headed out to deeper waters, I left the mess decks to check out other areas of the ship that needed repair. I went to the weight-lifting room, directly above the CT spaces where the torpedo had hit. I entered the room and saw that what had been a perfectly level, steel deck floor before had now been turned into something resembling some weird modern art. There was a giant hole in the middle with writhing tentacles of steel protruding upwards. I stepped up to the edge of the hole and looked down. I saw only ocean below me and no ship at all. In order to prevent others from unknowingly walking into the room and falling into the hole, we filled it with mattresses.

We went to work in plugging holes to keep the sea out. The plugs were made of wood, sometimes as wide as 15 inches in diameter and tapered like a sharpened pencil. We wrapped cloth around the points and then pounded the dowels into the holes in the ship. There were close to a thousand holes in our ship, so we were busy well into the night.

I went back to the CT spaces where the torpedo had hit and found that the scuttle hatch had been opened. The water line was a mere 18 inches below the hatch. My only conclusion was that some good Samaritan had come along wanting to see if there were any souls left to be saved in what was now a giant, watery grave.

I left the area and headed towards the shaft alley which housed the mechanism for turning the ship's propeller. Part of my regular duties on Sounding and Security was to check the packing around the shaft that kept the ocean out. It was fine; one of the few things on the ship not damaged in Israel's attack, and so I left the area.

I headed back to the mess decks, the place where we all used to meet during happier times to eat, drink coffee, play cards and in general, form friendships with our fellow American servicemen. As I re-entered the mess deck, the sun had already set. The sheer mass of human suffering moved me to such emotion that my knees got weak.

Upon seeing the agony before me, my impulse was to break down in tears, but I dared not. There were men in front me, broken men,

and I was not about to show disrespect for their suffering by crying like a baby when I was on both feet and with no mortal wounds on my body.

As part of my basic training, I had learned basic first-aid. Now however, looking at everything that lay before me, it was obvious that this training would do me (as well as the men lying before me) no good. I went from broken man to broken man, asking what I could do to make him feel more comfortable. As I was doing this, all at once I heard a voice off to the right call me--

“Tourney,”

I turned to discover that the source of this was Commander Phillip Armstrong, the ship’s Executive Officer (XO). He was lying on a dining table and by all appearances must have sustained only superficial wounds, because there was very little blood. In addition, he was alert, active, and did not seem to be in any pain.

He asked me for a cigarette, since he knew I smoked at that time. I lit one and put it in his mouth for him. We sat and shot the bull for a few minutes. He asked me questions -

“How many wounded?” “How many dead?” “What time is it?” “How’s Captain doing?”

I answered his questions as best as I could. He asked for another cigarette. I lit one for him, as well as one for myself. We sat and smoked together, continuing our conversation. He never moaned or groaned or complained about anything; not his wounds, physical pain or anything else. His entire demeanor was one of concern for the crew and the ship, making our little sojourn with each other a pleasant break for me. For those brief few minutes during the conversation between us, things were semi-normal. He was an officer and I was his subordinate. He had the bearing and confidence necessary if an officer is to lead his men and this made me feel good.

While this conversation was taking place, in perfect stereo I could hear the sounds of agony all around me as men lay waiting, either

for the comfort of morphine or the comfort of death. Thinking that Commander Armstrong was okay, I told him I had to get moving.

I headed for the First-Class Mess, to see if there were blankets or anything else I could find to make the suffering of my wounded shipmates more endurable. There was nothing to be found. I went back to Commander Armstrong to check in on him and see how he was getting along. To my great shock and sadness, he was dead.

He was a graduate of the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. He served his country honorably in life and with dignity in death. Like any good American soldier, Armstrong died in his uniform, unlike many of our politicians, whose only uniforms are the lies, false promises, and platitudes they give when trying to get elected to an office that they do not deserve to hold.

I was summoned to the Ward Room, the officers' mess hall. As I entered, the first thing I saw was Doctor Richard Kiepfer. He was the only M.D. on a ship carrying close to 300 men.

Like any college grad, Doc was an officer, holding the rank of Lieutenant. He was in his khaki uniform that U.S. Naval officers wear, but curiously, he also had a life jacket around him. I thought at the time that this was because he was afraid the ship would sink from the torpedo hole. I found out later this was not the reason.

I assumed that the blood I saw on his pant legs was from those whose wounds he had been treating. Like my previous assumption concerning the life jacket, I found out later this also was not the case.

When I had finished my quick study of Doc Kiepfer, I turned to see one of my fellow enlisted men, Gary Blanchard, lying on a table right next to me. Although his front showed no signs of any wounds, he was lying in a puddle of his own blood that seemed to get bigger second by second. His first words to me were to ask that I remove his socks, saying his feet were on fire. I did as he asked. His next words were to ask if he was going to make it. I could do no more than shake my head "no".

Years later, I always hated myself for that. Why didn't I lie to him, or at least, try to change the subject? They say honesty is a virtue, but if I had to do it over again I would probably not be as "virtuous" as I was that day. My only hope is that the shaking of my head put him in the frame of mind he needed to be in to make peace with his Maker before the final curtain.

Doc Kieper came over and unbuttoned Blanchard's shirt. I figured Doc was going to examine his wounds, although I could see there weren't any - at least in the front. A second later, when I saw that scalpel in Doc's hands, I knew what was coming. Doc started at his chest bone and cut him open all the way to his balls. As fast as he opened him, Blanchard was on his way to a better place.

I had been holding a battle lantern for Doc so he could see what the hell he was doing. I continued holding the light. Doc, seeing that Blanchard was gone, put two or three stitches in him to hold his guts together and then moved on, because there was so much more work for him to do.

I remained in the Ward Room until I was no longer needed. At that point, one of my superiors, (I think it was Ensign Scott) told me I could go back to my "regular" duties.

If anyone aboard that ship deserved the Congressional Medal of Honor, it was Doc.

I learned later why Doc was wearing the lifevest. It wasn't because he was afraid we would sink. Rather, it was because he had taken a razor-sharp piece of shrapnel across his midsection and was using the vest to hold his insides in. He stood there, literally with his guts wanting to spill out all over the floor in the same way that someone would vomit all over the place and rather than take care of his own needs he took care of the more seriously wounded. Doc is one of those guys who - if this had been another time and another battle - would have had books and movies made about him. Every school kid in America would know about him the same way they know about George Washington.

However, because it was Israel responsible for all this carnage, only a handful of people know about Doc. I am sure that Israel and her supporters curse fate that Doc did not die during the attack, for if he had, their haul at the end of the day - meaning the number of Americans killed - would have been much higher.

I headed back to the mess decks, but seeing that I would be more a hindrance than a help, I left and began making my way back to the bridge where Captain McGonagle was.

Since all of our instrumentation had been blown to hell, we were sailing by the stars, just as our forefathers had done in centuries past. Captain asked me what kind of shape the ship was in. I told him there was no change. Then, somewhat stepping over the bounds for an enlisted man, I asked him how he was doing. His response was short but sweet - "I am fine, thanks, Tourney." I left him and went back to my duties on Sounding and Security.

I departed the bridge, somewhat comfortable over the fact we were still able to float.

It was dark by then, but I had no idea what time it was. I headed for Main Control, meaning the engine room. The first person I saw when I got there was Lt. Golden. He was participating in and directing all efforts to keep the heart of the ship beating - meaning to keep the boilers running. The boilers served as the power source for nearly all the ship's functions, including movement and electric.

I spoke with Lt. Golden. He knew I was in Damage Control, and like Capt. McGonagle had earlier, he asked about the condition of the ship. In particular he wanted to know about the CT spaces that had been obliterated by the torpedo blast. I told him the bulkheads on the forward and stern compartments where the torpedo had hit looked like balloons, meaning that they were bowed outward from the massive explosion of the torpedo. I further reported that they appeared to be holding - yet another testimony to the greatness of America. Our steel walls had suffered such an explosion and yet were still holding together.

From there I headed to the fire room, one level down from engineering, where the boilers did their work.

As best as I can describe them, the boilers were fireboxes; roughly 20 feet by 20 feet. They had a network of pipes running throughout them which were filled with water that was heated to make the steam that ran the ship's vital systems.

As I entered the boiler room, I was relieved to see my shipmates alive and well, or at least as well as can be expected, considering what they had just gone through.

Their nerves had to have been rattled just as badly as mine, if not worse. They, like the CTs, worked below the water line and it was this very same compartment where I was now standing that Israel had tried to hit, knowing that if the cold sea water was let into the room the boilers would go up like atomic bombs. These men had remained down there doing their duty as each of the five torpedoes were launched, even though they knew they were at ground zero and considered the bull's-eye of the ship.

I sat with my brothers-in-arms shooting the bull for a while.

I sat and stared at them in awe. I knew that none of them, not even one, had abandoned their stations the whole time the ship was under attack. I learned later that during the worst part of the assault, Lt. Golden, fearing for the safety of his men, ordered everyone in the area to evacuate. Despite being given a direct order to leave the spaces, Benjamin Ash, a fireman, refused to obey and remained. In the boiler room one deck below, the other firemen had either not received the orders to evacuate or else had simply disregarded them as well. Knowing they were face to face with death and could be killed at any second, nevertheless they had continued their duties without consideration for the danger their own lives were in.

Their courageous actions that day saved not only the ship, but indeed, probably tens of millions of people worldwide who would have perished if the *LIBERTY* had gone down as our assassins wanted. The world owes a debt to these men it can never repay,

and yet to this day these men have received nothing - officially or otherwise - for their bravery and their sacrifice.

I ask the reader to memorize the names of these men and always pay them the respect they deserve when recounting this story to others:

- Lt. George Golden
- Chief Richard Brooks
- Fireman Benjamin Ash
- Petty Officer Gene Owens
- Petty Officer Gary W. Brummett
- Petty Officer J.P. Newell
- Damage Controlman James Smith
- Petty Officer Robert C. Kidd
- Ensign Malcom Watson
- Petty Officer Rick Aimetti
- Albert Brammelsburg
- Steven J. Krasnasky
- Richard Munford
- Jim Kelly

If I have missed any of you men who should be listed here, I give my deepest apologies.

Of the many miracles taking place that day, one of them was the issue of the coffin pump. What a name. The coffin pump was responsible for bringing sea water into the boiler during an emergency when the regular pumps were not working.

During the attack, the main tank (known as the DA Tank) that held the hot water going to the boilers was drained for fear that if hit by either a bullet or a rocket, it would spray boiling water on everything in the area, including the men down there. Draining the DA Tank would have been like emptying the gas tank on a car. The ship would have been without power if it had not been for the coffin pump. The day before the attack, the coffin pump had been acting up. It is only because Brummett and Newell had repaired the SOB and got it working before the attack began that I am here writing this book right now.

As we sat there shooting the bull, as welcoming as rain during a drought there appeared amongst us a bottle of scotch. Technically speaking, it was against the rules for us to be drinking anything alcoholic on the ship. However, we justified bending the rules this time on the grounds that we had just been through hell and could use a little anesthesia for our nerves. We passed the bottle around, wondering if we would make it through the night without the vampire returning. After all, it is a creature of the dark who does his worst work in the dark.

Fear was not the only emotion we were dealing with at that time. We were also thankful to be alive and in one piece, at least physically. We were proud to be Americans and proud of the fact that our good ship, *LIBERTY*, had protected us just as a loving mother would protect the child growing within her. The euphoria we felt just in being alive however also gave us great sadness and disappointment in thinking about all our friends who had had their precious lives stolen from them.

Young men, sons, brothers, nephews, uncles, grandsons, husbands, fathers...men who had bright futures before them, and whose lives had been erased as if they were the mere scribblings of some child on a blackboard.

The feeling was that we were on our own and no help was coming. It was an unavoidable conclusion in a sense, because no one had come to help us during the nearly two hours we were being attacked. Since we had done it on our own during the most harrowing time, we developed a temporary sense of independence about our situation.

At that time, we did not have any bad feelings towards our government at all. As an indicator of our naiveté, our assumption was that the mighty U.S. Navy was busy at that very moment in dealing with what had happened to us. They were “setting things straight” and somebody, somewhere, was surely getting what he deserved for what had been done to us. We were happy with this assumption. We were sure that if the Navy and our government *had* known what was taking place, they would have come to our aid in a microsecond. In our young, idealistic minds, there was no way

anybody anywhere would get away with what had just been done to the United States. It was, after all, not just an attack on a ship. It was an act of war against every man, woman and child in America. We were confident our leaders would not let our losses go in vain.

We were to be sorely disappointed.

As I sat there with my friends, I knew I was in the company of brave men. What I did not know at that time, but which I understand completely now, was that these were some of the bravest men the world had ever produced. If this were a just world, there would be cities, states, streets and just about everything else you can imagine named after them in honor of what they did that day.

Chapter 6--Eighteen Hours of Hell

To call it a long night is an understatement. None of us slept, and for two reasons: Firstly, we were afraid of the dark. Not like little kids, but rather because we knew that criminals prefer the cover of darkness when doing their dirty work. Those responsible for the previous day's attack might return to the scene of the crime to accomplish what they failed to do earlier. Secondly, we didn't know if the ship would even stay together. Although we were not sure of the exact size of the hole in the starboard side of the ship, we knew it was big. In addition to this, there was a ton of work that needed to be done to keep the ship afloat, and with all the losses we sustained in terms of personnel killed or wounded, only a skeleton crew remained to do this monumental task.

We sat there in the boiler room talking about the attack and how glad we were that we had survived it. At the same time however, although we did not say so out loud, we all felt an enormous amount of survivor's guilt. "Why me?...Why us?" we asked ourselves within the confines of our own minds. What had we done to deserve God's mercy that day in having our life, liberty and pursuit of happiness spared, while others had not?

Again, understandably, we visited and revisited the question as to why no one came to our aid. Whether it was a defense mechanism or just sheer denial on our part, we refused to even consider the possibility that it was deliberate. As I already stated, our conclusion was that our government was doing something big - something "hush-hush" - which was preventing them from coming to our aid.

We didn't realize how right we were in that last assumption.

The other big question in our mind was why Israel would do something like this to us? The U.S. was not merely her best friend, but indeed her *only* friend in the world. Friends don't do this to friends. This was pure treachery; the handiwork of an enemy.

I stayed with my brothers-in-arms as long as I felt was acceptable and then got my ass up and went back to work. Although I did not realize it then, I had just been in the company of true American heroes. Not only had they saved the ship that day by remaining at their posts while under torpedo attack, but also saved the lives of tens of millions, (possibly even hundreds of millions) of people that day. If they had not remained down there and kept the boilers working, the *LIBERTY* would indeed have gone down and the rest of the world with her. However, we will discuss all this later.

I went back to my regular duty, meaning Sounding and Security and Damage Control.

I made my usual rounds, which now included both bulkheads encompassing the CT spaces where the torpedo had hit. The walls, made of plate steel not more than an inch thick, were sweaty from the cool ocean water on the other side. I could hear the water sloshing around, knowing that if the bulkheads ever gave way I would be a goner.

I could see cracks in the steel walls caused by the enormous pressure being exerted against them by the Mediterranean sea. They were like balloons, blown outward from within as a result of the torpedo explosion. My biggest fear was that the cracks in the walls would eventually get larger and larger until finally they gave up the ghost and surrendered to the awesome power of the sea. The walls

looked like they were alive and breathing as they heaved in and out with the movement of the ship and the pressure of the water. I got shivers standing in such close proximity to them, knowing that the only thing standing between me and my own death was a plate of steel that was ready to cry uncle and give up the fight at any second.

Making my rounds, I made my way to the bridge yet again. Captain McGonagle was alert and in charge. I made a report as to what damage I had encountered and what needed to be done about it. He asked about the condition of the crew. No doubt by this time, he had gotten word that his right-hand man and Executive Officer Commander Phillip McKutchen Armstrong had passed away. I doubt though that Captain was aware of the fact that I was one of the last people to see him alive. I did not think it necessary at that time to relate the story to him about how I had given Commander Armstrong his last cigarette before he left this world. It made me think about those old movies where someone who had been convicted of some capital crime was about to be executed and was given his last meal, last rites and last cigarette.

As far as his question concerning the rest of the crew, I told him everything that could possibly be done was being done.

Brown, my good friend who had had his brains blown out while steering the ship, had been taken away. The floor was caked with dried blood, giving it a sandpaper-type surface, meaning rough and tractable, the opposite of what it had been when the blood was wet and slippery.

I left the bridge and continued on with my rounds. As I descended the stairs from the bridge, my eyes caught something off to my peripheral right - faint sunlight. The sun was coming up over the eastern horizon, just as it had done millions of other times before, during periods of both war and peace. I welcomed the return of daylight the way a kid welcomes toys on Christmas morning. Even if our world had been turned upside down, the sun was coming up again, just as it had the day before and just as it would tomorrow.

This meant that there was a power higher than both man and the devil still in control of things.

Despite going through the harrowing two-hour attack and having received no sleep the night before, I was still running on adrenalin. I knew I must be exhausted but for some reason, my mind and body would not allow it to take hold of me. I thought I wouldn't sleep again for week.

The deck was full of men. Some of them were milling about and some of them were lying down trying to sleep. They were scared to be below decks in case the ship went down. I stayed on the main deck to watch the miracle of sunrise when I noticed a ship on the horizon at our stern, the back of the ship. I couldn't tell what kind of ship it was. Later, I found out it was Russian and that it had been following us throughout the night. Then I saw two other ships coming up behind the Russian and both of them moving fast. In due time I could see they were both U.S. destroyers. Both ships closed the distance between us quickly and the next thing I knew, they were almost on top of us. As the *USS DAVIS* and the *USS MASSEY* made their arrival, the Russian ship left.

I stood on the main deck taking in the scene, when I was approached by my Damage Control Officer, John Scott.

"The old man wants the ship cleaned up," he said.

I knew exactly what he meant without him going into the details of it. He wasn't talking about a spit shine. He was talking about hosing off the remains of the murdered *LIBERTY* crew from the deck's surface.

The ship's deck looked like the floor of a slaughterhouse. Pieces of flesh, bone, hair, organs, and everything else imaginable were glued to the deck with dried blood. Rick Aimetti and I found what undamaged firehoses we could and started hosing off the deck. The hose had what was called a "suicide nozzle" on it, named thus because it was tapered in such a way that the water came out in an extremely concentrated and high-pressure stream. It was used for removing stubborn stains. Two men were needed to operate the

hose because it was literally like wrestling a giant python and something one guy couldn't do alone.

We began the gruesome, heartbreaking task of washing the remains of our friends off the deck as if they were pieces of unwanted debris and knowing the fish would be all too happy with the treats they would be getting. As we were cleaning one of the gun-tubs, we found a shoe with a foot still in it. We did not wash this overboard but rather put it aside to be collected later.

As much as we hit the bloodstains with that hose, they would not come up. The previous day's intense heat, both from the sun and from the fires caused by the rockets and napalm had baked the blood into the deck permanently.

As the bible describes it, one of the religious practices the Jews used to perform was to take a ram, bull, or goat, cut its throat, drain its blood and then burn it on an altar in what was called a holocaust or burnt offering. It was - they believed - a way of atoning for their sins to God.

And now, seeing how the blood would not come up from the deck, I realized we, the men of the *USS LIBERTY*, had become that burnt offering. As Aimetti and I performed this ungodly work, tears streamed down our faces. We had once known these pieces of flesh as men. They had been our friends and our brothers and I prayed that God would forgive me for what I did in treating the remains of these brave men so disrespectfully. We worked inch by inch, trying as best as we could to return the *LIBERTY* to something close to the condition it was in before June 8, 1967 at approximately 2:00 pm when the State of Israel tried to murder us all.

Now, as the sun was coming up and I was able to get a good look at the damage we sustained, I knew there was a God, because it was nothing less than a miracle that we were still afloat.

Despite the fact it had not saved us from being attacked the day before, the crew of the *LIBERTY* was excited to see the red, white and blue flag of our beloved homeland being displayed on the other ships as they approached. Someone's voice, (I don't know whose)

came over the ship's intercom announcing that a destroyer was coming alongside the *LIBERTY*. The water was like a sheet of smooth glass - not a ripple to be found. The *USS DAVIS* came up alongside us until we were separated only by inches. They threw over about half a dozen lines. We caught them and tied the two ships together. As soon as the ships were wed, a plank was put in place and the men of the *DAVIS* started boarding our ship. There were about thirty or forty of them, to my guess.

The emotions of the *DAVIS* crew ranged from fury to devastation. Men cursed like sailors and cried like babies. Over and over we heard from them the apologies; that they would have given their family jewels to have been here to stop the carnage. Some of the *DAVIS* crew ran their hands over the holes in the ship's surface, shaking their heads in disgust and outrage.

No one lost control though. As ambassadors of the United States of America, they remained orderly and professional, just as their training in the U.S. Navy had imposed upon them.

The crewmen of the *DAVIS* and *LIBERTY* started moving the most seriously wounded from the mess halls and passageways up to the main deck. Shortly thereafter, the aircraft carrier *USS AMERICA* maneuvered itself into the area, keeping some distance between herself and us, just in case it was necessary to launch fighter jets.

The evacuation of the wounded had finally begun, some eighteen hours after Israel's initial attack. Helicopters from the *USS AMERICA* were coming over, would hover above the *LIBERTY* (there was no place to land because of all our antennae) as life stretchers were hoisted up to the helicopters with cables. One by one, the wounded of the *LIBERTY* were ferried over to the *AMERICA* and taken to the hospital aboard the carrier.

Chapter 7--A Group Effort

Despite the fact there were no more bombs and bullets raining down on us, our situation was still just as dire as it had been during

the two hours of Israel's attack. Because of the torpedo blast, the ship was in such a state that it could break apart and sink at any minute. Since the crew of the *USS DAVIS* was there to help out with evacuating the wounded to the *USS AMERICA*, I was put back to work in bandaging the ship in any way possible. We got help from some of the Damage Control personnel serving aboard the *DAVIS*, which was a really good thing. We had just been through eighteen hours of hell, so naturally, we were all exhausted.

The *DAVIS* personnel brought over shoring equipment and other supplies we had needed earlier but lacked. Lumber was brought onboard the *LIBERTY* piece by piece.

We went below decks to assess the damage done by the torpedo. We stood there, examining the walls as they bulged from the pressure of the seawater on the other side. It was - literally - an emergency situation. If those walls gave way, it would flood a barely-afloat ship with even more water and the fact was we couldn't take on even one more drop if we expected to stay above sea level. What this meant then was bracing up those steel walls before they finally gave out, and doing it fast. There was no time for architects or structural engineers to do a long, drawn-out study of the situation and draw up blueprints.

All of us had grown up learning something about building and had heard the old phrase "measure twice, cut once" from our fathers and grandfathers many times. We did this, but in a hurried fashion.

Working side by side with men whom we had never met but who seemed like lifelong friends, we started the construction of our masterpiece. Timbers went high and low and diagonal. We made as many triangles as we could, since the triangle is one of the strongest shapes you can use in construction. We worked at a very fast pace, yet remained cautious and methodical. In many ways it was like doing field surgery on someone who had just been hit - you had to stop the bleeding fast and get the wound covered before he bled to death but you didn't have time to worry about making it pretty.

We could feel the warmth of the Mediterranean sea on the bulkhead. Water dripped in through the fractures in the wall caused

by the torpedo explosion. We were aware (and terrified) of the fact that at any moment the wall could give way, resulting in us being swept into watery graves, just as our fellow crewmen had been the previous day.

As we worked, the *DAVIS* guys wanted to know about the attack. The confusion on their faces was obvious when we described the Star of David flag on the torpedo boats. They asked us again and again, *“Are you sure it was Israel? Maybe it was the Arabs pretending to be them.”*

We assured them it was not the Arabs who had done this to America. A few guys were slow in coming to grips with the ugly truth that the culprit was indeed America’s “only ally” in the Middle East. A short discussion ensued amongst them when suddenly one guy from the *DAVIS*, becoming disgusted that some of his crewmen were reluctant to believe what we as eyewitnesses were telling them, shouted out loud in exasperation, *“Come on guys, if they would murder a guy like Jesus, you think they’d do any less to us?!”*

As soon as this little piece of history had been remembered, the mood changed dramatically and those who had previously been on the fence now joined us in our outrage. It is safe to say that the crewmen of the *DAVIS*, realizing that America had indeed been stabbed in the back by her ally, now took it just as personally as we did.

Our work was directed by an officer from the *DAVIS* named Toben along with John Scott. As it has been throughout history, the aristocrats watched and directed while we peasants in the enlisted ranks worked.

We didn’t pay much attention to the time. As long as we were working in getting the bulkhead shored up, we were content.

Our team was by no means the only one doing damage control. Since virtually every inch of the ship had been cut to pieces by Israel in some way, we had plenty to do. We all worked, busy as

bees, doing field surgery on the battered ship *LIBERTY*. The operation lasted most of the day.

Besides the *DAVIS*, we had as guests in our little corner of the ocean the *USS AMERICA*, the *USS MASSEY* and the *USS PAPAGO*, a U.S. Navy tug boat. All the wounded had been taken off the ship. We double and then triple-checked the shoring until we were confident it was as good as it was going to get.

Once the evacuation of the wounded was done, I marveled at how quickly time was passing. The day before, while we were under attack, every minute seemed to pass as slowly as an hour running on fumes and with a flat tire.

Everything that could be done had been and the other ships - *MASSEY* and *AMERICA* - had to get moving and back on their schedules. As the *AMERICA* prepared to depart, carrying our wounded with her, the crew aboard the *AMERICA* gave three cheers for the *LIBERTY*-- "*HIP, HIP--HORRAY!...HIP, HIP--HORRAY!...HIP, HIP--HORRAY!...*"

The sounds of the men's voices echoed across the Mediterranean sea and crashed against the side of our battered ship.

My throat swelled up with emotion like someone had punched it. Seeing a sea of men across the way, donning their blue work uniforms and white hats while cheering for us poor SOBs is a memory I will never forget as long as I live. We thanked the crew of the *DAVIS*. Then they jumped ship and went back, but as far as we were all concerned, we were no longer two crews but one.

As soon as the *DAVIS* crew left, a voice came over the intercom, telling ship's crew to prepare for departure. The boilers were fired up. No sooner had this taken place, than I felt the ship under me begin to move as the screw started to turn. Because of the gaping wound in our side, we had to move slowly. Although Captain must have known where we were headed, the

rest of us on the deck did not. However, as I was to find out soon, the fix had already been put in place and the cover-up of our attack was already well underway.

I knew we must be headed for some dry dock to do repairs as there was no way in either God's heaven or Lucifer's hell that we could make it across the Mediterranean and then across the Atlantic to America. The most logical place for us was Crete, the closest dry dock to our location and only a day and a half away.

The *DAVIS* and the *PAPAGO* trailed behind us closely and yet at a safe distance, ready to help us if something went wrong.

I needed sleep as desperately as some of the wounded had needed bandages and sutures. The last twenty-four hours might as well have been twenty-four months for the amount of work and stress I had endured.

However, sleep for me was not going to be taking place anytime soon, and what was about to happen would rob me of my sleep and peace of mind for the next forty-two years.

Chapter 8--An Unwelcome Guest

There was something about how it was said that made me a little uneasy when Lt. Golden, our engineering officer, announced with his made-to-order southern drawl,

“Boys, we’re not headed to Crete, so get ready for just a little bit of a ride.”

We had already been for a “little bit of a ride” over the last twenty-four hours. What was ahead?

I grabbed a few hours of sleep, only to wake in a state of panic. I realized within taking my first breath that there was something terribly wrong. As I regained my senses, I knew what it was that had assaulted me - the stench of death was everywhere. A terrible mixture of blood, organs, burned flesh and fuel oil was inescapable.

The bodies of my crewmen in the CT spaces killed by the torpedo were beginning to rot in that warm sea water and the smell was overpowering.

Having eaten nothing in over a day, I tried choking down some coffee and a baloney sandwich. As soon as the food touched the bottom of my stomach however I threw up and continued dry-heaving until I thought my guts would come up and spill out on the deck like those of my murdered shipmates.

I got a towel, poured some cool water on it, put it over my face and then laid down for a few more minutes. That must have been all I needed, because after that I was good to go and ready for business.

I began my regular duties of Sounding and Security patrol, starting at the back of the ship and working my way forward. Eventually, I made my way towards the spaces where the torpedo hit. I opened the hatch leading to the watery grave, lowering the battle lantern to see if there was anything down there - maybe a body or something. I saw nothing.

I found out later that the tug following us, the *USS PAPAGO*, had retrieved two bodies that had floated out of the spaces. I never found out whose they were.

In the interest of not losing anything else through that twenty-two by thirty-nine foot hole in the side, someone decided it might be best to do something. The ship came to a stop and then divers from the *USS PAPAGO* put a type of net over the hole and secured it with ropes that went completely over and under the ship. As soon as we started moving however, the nets tore and the ropes broke. We had to stop again and take the whole thing off because of the danger of the nets and ropes getting caught in the propeller, something that would have brought our journey to a halt real quick.

My next chore, and the one I dreaded more than any other, was to check the shoring we had constructed to keep the walls from caving in. I had to crawl into the spaces on my belly with a battle lantern, going to the skin of the ship on the starboard side and make a

mental note of each crack to see if it was getting any bigger as a result of the journey. It was like crawling into a coffin, because if all hell broke loose and those walls gave way, that was it. There would be no way out and you were going to die right there. I would crawl out backwards in the same way I had crawled in, re-checking each crack as I went. When I finally got the hell out of there and was on my feet again, I breathed a sigh of relief, feeling I had cheated death once again, and yet wondering when my luck was going to run out.

I was not the only person tasked with this job. Rick Aimetti, James Smith, and Dullio Demori also had been “volunteered” for this work and liked it just as much as I did. A lot of us had gone into the Navy to avoid going to Vietnam, and now, here we were being used as tunnel rats just like the ground-pounders there were.

We were attacked on a Thursday. Three days later, we were paid a visit by a two-star Admiral, Isaac Kidd, who had been brought over by the *USS PERRY*. We assumed he had come aboard the ship to show his support for the crew and what we had endured.

Kidd assembled the officers and senior enlisted men first and then began interrogating them about what had happened. I was not privy to how these interrogations progressed. In fact, I never assumed I would be involved in any questioning since I was just a junior NCO. As far as I was concerned, they (the officers and senior NCOs) were all together talking about it. Being the brains of the operation meant they would do their thing while we enlisted men did ours. That’s just the way it is in the military. As far as officers were concerned, we enlisted were like children - we should be seen and not heard.

I continued with my Sounding and Security detail which included reporting to the bridge every hour and giving a report to Captain McGonagle concerning the ship’s condition. I made my way to the bridge to give my report and immediately upon arriving I can see something is wrong. Captain McGonagle’s demeanor is completely foreign. He was short, curt, off-balance, irritated and anxious.

My first thought was that having a two-star admiral on board after the ship was attacked had him on edge, as if he thought it (the

attack) might result in something negative coming his way or towards his career.

McGonagle had joined the Navy just after WWII. Prior to coming onboard the *LIBERTY* he had done multiple shore duties as well as commanding several ships. When he had taken command of the *USS LIBERTY*, he was already a full commander; the equivalent of a Lt. Colonel in either the Army or Air Force. The rumor aboard ship was that he had been passed over twice for promotion to Captain (the equivalent of full Colonel in the aforementioned branches) indicating that the Navy was planning to retire him and that this would be his last ship.

Now, the change in his demeanor made me very uncomfortable, especially at a time when I was still in a certain amount of shock because of what we'd just been through. Like a kid who sees an unexplained change in the behavior of his mom or dad, there was an unease that came over me. I ran into some of the other officers and senior NCOs and noticed they were different as well. "Sullen" is the best word to describe them, and after that, "bitter" and "confused".

The next day, Monday afternoon, I was summoned to sick bay. I reported as ordered and saw that several other sailors were there already. My first thought was that maybe we had done something wrong and had gotten a call to report to the principal's office.

Ten minutes later, the door swung open and in marched Admiral Isaac Kidd. A voice called out, "OFFICER ON DECK". We stiffened up and stood at attention as was routine. Kidd shut the door behind him.

"Relax fellas," he said in a kind, fatherly voice, "you have no reason to fear me. In fact, I'm going to take off my stars."

He took them off and tossed them on the metal table, resulting in a high, metallic "ping" sound.

As soon as his stars were off, he was - officially speaking - not an officer anymore. Continuing in his fatherly demeanor towards us, he said humbly, "Gentlemen, I am trying to piece together what

happened, and I can't do it without you. I know you know I'm a flag admiral, but right now I am here to congratulate you and to let you know that your testimony is very, very important to me and my staff. I know that since the attack you fellas have had a lot of time to reflect about what happened and this is what I want to dig out of you. I'm not an admiral anymore, I am just like you - a third-class petty officer, a seaman recruit or a Lt. Commander. Feel free to speak up with anything you think is important. Also, this is off the record, so I want you to speak freely."

With great relief, we all started to breathe normally now, feeling that the weight of the world had just been taken off our shoulders. A flag admiral talking to you like this and treating you as an equal was like the time in the bible when Jesus washed the feet of His apostles.

He asked if any of us were in Damage Control. I raised my hand, indicating I was. He informed me that I would be the last to be questioned.

He dealt with each of us individually. In his hand was a pen as he wrote things down on a yellow legal pad like lawyers use. His first question was whether or not we had seen any markings on the recon aircraft surveilling us the morning before the attack began. All of us answered in the affirmative. Then he questioned each of us one at a time. "What about the attacking aircraft, were there markings? Did you see the torpedo boats? Did you see torpedo boats machine-gunning life rafts? Are you sure the U.S. flag was flying?"

I started to get excited, because he was asking all the questions that a cop would ask right before he went after the bad guys.

Then, Kidd came to me. Seeing how well he had treated the other guys encouraged me and made me feel like I should tell it all, which I did. I told him exactly everything I had seen, which was a lot, considering my duties in Sounding and Security and Damage Control. I described everything I had witnessed - the surveillance flights, the attacks, the fires, the wounded, the life rafts being shot up, the flag

flying and everything. Throughout my description, he never interrupted me once.

When we had finished, the feeling was great. We had opened up our hearts and souls to this man, who for all intents and purposes was like a father to us at this moment. How proud we were that we could confide in him, just as sons feel who know their dad is there looking out for them.

Then, his face changed and his attitude as well. His went from pale to red almost as if he had gotten an instant sunburn.

“Is there anything else anyone wants to say?” he asked.

Buoyed on by the fatherly way he had treated us and letting my sense of trust in him guide me, I raised my hand with a single question,

“Sir, why didn’t we get any help?”

I saw immediately that this did not sit well with him at all.

Without answering my question, he walked over to the stainless steel table onto which he had tossed his stars an hour earlier and put them back on his collars. The pins slipped easily into the same holes from which they had come, indicating he had done this many times before. As soon as the stars were in place - perfectly, just as they had been when he had entered the room - he spoke directly and I would say, threateningly. Dr. Jekyll had now become Mr. Hyde.

“Ok fellas, now I’m an admiral again and I want each and every one of you to understand something,” he said. “We’re talking about National Security here, not your personal feelings, not what you did or did not do...I could really give a shit about any of that. You listen to me once, because this is the only time you’re ever going to hear it. You are NEVER to repeat what you just told me to ANYONE - not your mother, your father, your wife - ANYONE, including your shipmates. You are not to discuss this with anyone,

and especially - ESPECIALLY - not with the media, or you will end up in my little prison, or worse.”

As he said the word “worse” he scowled. His face turned into a mask of hatred and rage. He presented it to each of us personally, one at a time.

On June 8, 1967 I had come face-to-face with the devil over the course of two hours and now I was looking into the eyes of the devil yet again in the person of Admiral Isaac Kidd. Who else but Satan himself could have moved a man to do what he had just done - not just to us, but to America?

It may sound like drama on my part, but now, forty-two years later, I know in my gut that he hated the fact we were standing in front of him alive and breathing. He started out of the room, stopping to look back at us. We were standing there in the same relaxed mode which he had encouraged us to adopt when the interrogation first started. Now he seemed to be offended that we had not come to attention as he was leaving.

“Attention on deck!” I shouted, fearing that if I and my shipmates did not stiffen up, he might kill us and throw us overboard right there.

He opened the door himself - gently. But before leaving, he turned his entire body in our direction and stared at us for as long as fifteen seconds. I thought I might piss in my pants, I was so scared. Then after finishing his glare, he stepped through the door and slammed it. He slammed it so hard that the steel on steel sounded like a bomb had gone off in the room.

We stood there at attention for a few seconds, unable to speak or think. We didn’t know if he was coming back through that door or maybe listening outside, waiting to catch us disobeying the orders he had just given us regarding our silence.

It was on that day, when realizing that my country was gone and had been taken over by a foreign, hostile force that my heart broke,

Marking the beginning of my own trail of tears which has lasted to this day.

Chapter 9--Forsaken

As I mentioned earlier, Mom took me to Mass as a kid.

All Catholic churches, no matter where they are, have a crucifix in them, showing Jesus as he hung on a cross with nails through his hands and feet. As a kid, I wondered and imagined how horrible it must have been for Jesus. He had done nothing wrong, had nothing but good deeds and good words for everyone. He was simply doing His duty for His fellow man and for His country, and yet they conspired against Him in dark corners and murdered Him for it. The last thing He called out was, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

And that was how I felt when Kidd left the room. In the moment he told us not to breathe a word to anyone concerning what we had seen, I knew that we, the crew of the *LIBERTY*, had been set up. I did not yet know why, or what these bastards had been planning, but the idea that we were originally supposed to sink and die was unquestionable to me.

And now I knew something of what it was like to be crucified. I was just doing my job that day for my country, as I was ordered. I had not killed anyone, I had broken no laws. I had done all the things I promised to do when I took my oath of office upon entering boot camp.

And what was my reward for all -this? To watch as my friends were murdered - to be handed over for crucifixion by the same government which I had sworn to protect. We had done our duties, expecting to get a pat on the back. Instead, we had gotten a knife stuck in up to the hilt and twisted sideways and from our own country.

Remember, I had had nothing but good feelings for Israel up to this point. They were our ally. We were all cheering for them when the

war started and hoped they would kick the shit out of the Arabs. I didn't even know what the word "anti-Semite" meant - assuming I had ever even heard it in the first place. I had nothing but good feelings for the Jewish people. They had suffered terribly because of Hitler and because of this I wanted to see them safe from ever going through something like that again and would have gladly sacrificed myself to make sure it never happened. After all, this is what Jesus meant when He said, "there is no greater love than when a man lays down his life for another."

That was then, but this is now. To those who look down their noses disapprovingly at me and shake their heads in condemnation, I say only this: "You had to be there." Just as a woman, after being gang-raped by a group of men suddenly becomes angry, fearful and wants nothing more to do with men, my feelings for our "ally" have changed forever.

I am not as forgiving as Jesus was. Murderers are murderers. As far as I'm concerned, what they do once they will do again if given the opportunity. The fact that Israel slaughtered thirty-four of my shipmates and yet receives over 30 million dollars a day from the U.S. means they view the whole affair as a profitable enterprise. Why then would they not do it again?

This is my greatest fear.

That day, when Kidd left us standing there like a woman thrown out of a car after being raped and told by her attackers "don't even think about calling the cops, bitch", my world changed. What's worse than the attack itself has been the knowledge - the personal knowledge - that we were set up and now would be deprived the justice we deserved. That has been the most bitter thing about this whole ordeal.

The other sailors and I stood there, still hearing the reverberations of Kidd screaming at us and slamming the door. You could have heard our hearts breaking. We wailed out from within our souls, knowing and yet not knowing that the rest of our lives would be a nightmare. I thought about Mom telling me the story of her people,

the American Indians who had been forced to walk their trail of tears and whose lives were cheap and expendable...

...And now I realized that my life too, was cheap and expendable, especially when compared to Israeli blood.

I did not know it at the time, but bringing us in together in small groups was a deliberate maneuver on Kidd's part. He had wanted to scare us and knew it would be easier if we were few in numbers. Had we been in there with twenty other guys, we would not have felt so helpless.

After Kidd left, I walked over to the door he had just slammed shut and beat my hands against the steel bulkhead as hard as I could. They exploded with pain, but the pain was refreshing because it let me know I was still alive. What I was saying with my fists that I could not say with my mouth was, "FUCK YOU, ADMIRAL, SIR! MY LIFE AND THE LIVES OF MY SHIPMATES MEAN SOMETHING, SO FUCK YOU, SIR! GET IT?!"

And in that instant I lost all respect for authority. I lost my respect for the U.S. Navy. I lost respect for my country. I would never trust them again. Ever. From then on, although I would salute as required, what I would be thinking within the confines of my own mind would be, "KISS MY ASS SIR." As far as I was concerned they were - all of them - accomplices to cold-blooded murder, and the worst part was that *they knew it*. This is not the mark of a leader, it is the mark of a coward and a traitor.

It was not just Admiral Isaac Kidd, but also his boss, Admiral John McCain, and his bosses, Secretary of Defense Robert Strange McNamara and President of the United States Lyndon Baines Johnson. May they burn in hell for allowing themselves to become nothing more than puppets to Israel - just as virtually every elected American official is today.

Nothing has changed since 1967. For me, every day is June 8, 1967. Now - just like it was then - Israel rules America and the only thing that has changed has been the seasons.

When I walked out of sick bay, I was a totally different man than I was when I had walked in. In many ways, I would rather have been one of those poor bastards who had bought it when the bullets, torpedoes, rockets and napalm had come and robbed them of this life. For them it was over and they were dealing with the next life.

For me, a new life was just beginning too, and not an easy one.

Chapter 10--Scars

I left sick bay, thinking of everything that had just taken place. I had just been chewed out for being alive. Not a word mentioned about the men who had died, whose bodies were still down in the CT spaces in a hot-water grave. Not a word about the men who lay wounded and who needed - based upon what I saw - a hell of a lot more than few bandages.

We sailors all went separate ways, down different passageways, just as we were to do later in life after we all left the Navy. Trying to forget what had just taken place, I headed back to the mundane, yet predictable world of Sounding and Security.

I tried concentrating my mental energies on work in the interests of putting the horrible experience with Kidd out of my mind, but I couldn't. I simply couldn't believe - after what had just been done to us by a foreign country - that we would be treated as if we were just a bunch of common criminals caught spray-painting graffiti on a concrete wall.

Despite our orders to stay quiet, we all got together and - with the utmost caution - talked. Our barely-audible murmurs turned into whispers. Whispers turned into louder whispers and pretty soon, all of us were in agreement - "Can you believe this?!"

The day went on. I headed to the bridge, just as my duty required. The old man, (McGonagle) asked me if I had ever steered a ship before.

“No sir,” I said, “I have been in engineering my whole time in the Navy.”

But despite the fact I didn’t know shit from shine-ola when it came to steering a ship, he said, “Take the conn, sailor, you have the wheel.”

I protested as much as an enlisted man can to his commanding officer, telling him I didn’t know what the hell I was doing but in the end it made no difference. He, gesturing with his hand and yet not saying a word, ordered me to the wheel. As I moved towards the wheel, the guy standing there - I don’t remember who it was - simply laid down on the deck and fell asleep.

“Give the guy a break,” McGonagle said to me. “He’s been here hour after hour after hour.”

Only a few days earlier, my good friend, Francis Brown, had been standing right here in this same spot. When I put my hands on the ship’s wheel, a shock went through me as if I had grabbed a bare electric wire. The last time I had seen Brown alive, he was standing right here, maneuvering the ship and then a few minutes later he was lying on the deck in a pool of his own blood.

Now I was standing in this hero’s previous post; touching the same wheel that had saved the ship throughout the torpedo attacks. Without the skills of Francis Brown, we would all be fish food now and the U.S. and Russia would be at war with each other. Instinctively, I would look over my shoulder at the hole in the bulkhead where the projectile had come through and killed my good friend. As I stood there, reverently mimicking the motions of my dead friend, I thought about what that SOB of an admiral had just done in defaming his memory.

I sailed the ship for two or three hours - I can’t remember exactly how long. Then someone else - I don’t remember who - came by and relieved me, and I was relieved that he did. I left the bridge. I was not aware of it then, but this would not be the last time I would sail the good ship, *USS LIBERTY*.

As I left the bridge, my body screamed out for sleep. I had only had a few hours in the last four or five days. I noticed that most of the guys still insisted on sleeping up on the main deck for fear that if the ship went down, they would too.

I went to my rack and saw immediately that the mattress was gone. No doubt it had been taken for the benefit of someone who had been wounded earlier. I grabbed another mattress, threw it on my rack, climbed up and slept for a good four hours. It was like an eternity, considering how little sleep I had gotten in the last four days.

Like before, I woke again to the sickening smell of death and fuel oil. Before June 8 1967, my eyes would simply flutter awake. Now, I would wake up to the gag reflex in the back of my throat. I kept whatever it was in my stomach down and went back to my duties in Damage Control and in Sounding and Security.

Again, as previously, part of my duties would be to check the shoring we put up against the bulkheads on the other side of the CT spaces where the torpedo hit. No matter how many times I went down there, it was the same terror for me to crawl on my stomach down through the network of timbers constructed to keep the steel walls from collapsing. Every time I went down there, I was sure it would be the end of me - that the walls would give and I would be trapped like a sardine in a tin can.

I knew every crack in that bulkhead intimately. I knew how big they were, how small, how wide and if it they had gotten any bigger since our last meeting. Everything was committed to memory, so I didn't need to write anything down - not that I could have anyway. And then, just as before, I would inch my way out backwards. I always came out sopping wet, but can't say whether it was from the sea water or from the terror-stricken sweat that came out of my pores like a million different faucets.

Finally getting back on my feet each time was euphoric and each time I gave thanks to our sister ship, *USS DAVIS* for all the assistance she gave us in shoring up those walls.

We - the grunts - had no idea where we were headed, but wherever it was, we were getting closer and closer. I wouldn't wish this trip on my worst enemy. It was long, tense, emotional and heartbreaking. The days at sea were long and hot, making the stench of death in the ship's bowels all the worse. Just when you thought it couldn't get any worse, it did.

I will never forget that smell. I can smell it right now, forty-two years later as I write this. To this day I - and more specifically, my stomach - have no threshold for any kind of odor associated with death or decay. This intolerance is so strong that I throw away leftovers in the fridge long before necessary. Even in the best and easiest of circumstances, I have a very weak stomach, so getting anything down my throat is something of a chore.

I could not help but flash-back to the attack and the fear I felt during it all. But the attack by Admiral Kidd was worse. It had scarred me, like an animal being branded with a red-hot iron; only instead of on the rump it was on my heart, mind and soul. I know I am not the only one who feels that way.

Whenever I thought about Kidd my impulse was to scratch myself all over. I felt dirty and no matter how much I might wash, I would never be clean. I was only the ripe old age of twenty at that time, and although I did not understand it intellectually, my gut told me that I had just been unwillingly drafted into something horrible - treason against my country and betrayal of my friends and fellow Americans.

Chapter 11--When In Rome

When we were two days away from our destination, I found out through the grapevine we were headed for the island of Malta. This would be our first time there. The only thing we knew about Malta was that it was a small island in the Mediterranean. It was very Catholic. To say we were looking forward to putting our feet on solid ground is an understatement. Our anticipation made the hours creep by even slower.

We knew we were headed there for repairs. We also knew that once we docked we would be going down into the CT spaces and getting the guys out. (Or at least, what was left of them.)

Only afterwards did I realize there was method to this madness of sending us to Malta instead of Crete. Crete was only a day and a half away, giving us a better chance of surviving the trip. Instead, the route we were ordered to take was across some of the deepest water in the Mediterranean, and rather than a mere day and a half away it would be closer to a week in getting there. Obviously, someone was hoping we would sink along the way, making the cover-up of what happened all the easier to accomplish. With no dead corpse as proof of their conspiracy, (as well as their incompetence in sinking us) it would make their acquittal of these war crimes all the more assured.

Out of the original crew of almost 300 men, there were only about one-third remaining after all the wounded had been airlifted off. The few of the remaining whom I trusted (namely Rick Aimetti, Dullio Demori, plus a few others) and I would get together and talk about what Kidd had done to us. We always made sure to be careful with what we said, where we said it and who was around. Kidd had literally put the fear of - I don't want to say "God" here, because I know God had nothing to do with this evil thing - but the fear of something in us for sure. One of the many things we agreed on was the feeling that we had all been treated as if we were the criminals instead of the people who had attacked us. I have heard stories about women being raped, and how the newspapers and others would suggest it was her fault because she was "provoking" the attack with her dress and demeanor. Now to a certain extent, I understood a little bit of how it felt to be a woman who experienced such a thing.

Remember, relatively speaking we were just kids at the time. We didn't understand all this business involving geopolitics and complex strategies and whatnot. As young enlisted men, ours was a very simple worldview. There was good and there was evil and if you didn't want bad things to happen to you, you made sure not to do bad things.

Furthermore, we were America. We had fought the bad guys and won every time. The idea that our government - and more importantly the President, the progeny of George Washington himself - could conspire with the enemy was unthinkable, making this perplexity all the more difficult to handle in our young minds.

Ironically or not, my two best friends aboard the ship, Aimetti and Demori, were both full-blooded Italians. Italians are well-known to have an easily-pushed “pissed-off button”. In the case involving Kidd, their anger was easy to see. More importantly, it was infectious and therefore easily passed on to other crew members. We all knew we had been betrayed and in the most cowardly way. Kidd came in, speaking to us like a father so we would trust him, just as Judas did when he kissed Jesus before handing Him over to His enemies.

After Kidd did his “thing” to us, we knew we had fallen into something big, but we did not know how big. Now, forty-two years later, we know a lot more than we did then. We certainly don’t know the whole story, but the one thing we learned above all else is that what Israel wants, Israel gets, and everyone else - including the American servicemen killed on June 8, 1967 (as well as those who have been killed fighting Israel’s wars in Iraq and Afghanistan today) can just go to hell.

As we sat there, the three of us, letting our anger boil up to the surface, we made a pact that if possible, we would stay with the ship and see her home.

The rest of the trip to Malta was uneventful. Then, on Wednesday morning, like something out of an epic movie, we could see land far off in the distance.

To call it a relief is yet another understatement among many. That we had made it six days and about 1200 miles without going down was just another of the many miracles that took place surrounding this whole thing. Minute by minute, the ship got closer and closer as the island got bigger and bigger. The next thing we knew, we were preparing to enter the dry-dock. The gates on the dock were

opened like the inviting arms of a beautiful woman and we were guided in. The doors closed behind us.

Divers from the *PAPAGO* got suited up and jumped in the water next to us. They stretched a large canvas across the torpedo hole to prevent debris, dead bodies and body parts from floating out. Underneath the ship, huge wooden blocks were placed so that when the water was drained from the dock the ship would rest above the floor with enough space for a man to walk underneath if he hunched down. The Maltese dock workers put 12-by-12-inch wooden timbers up as braces against the side of the ship to keep it from tipping over once she came to rest on those blocks.

Once all the preparations were made and double-checked, they started the pumps and the water began receding. The ship sank, but not that far because of the huge wooden blocks placed below us. Finally, there was no more water around us.

The canvas over the torpedo hole began to bulge with the debris it was holding back. We could see the slimy mixture of water and fuel oil pouring out. I watched, leaning over the side of the ship as they released the canvas. It was like Santa Claus dumping his bag of goodies out on the floor. Because of the fact that the debris included highly-classified documents and communications equipment that were property of the National Security Agency, the CT's were sent down there to retrieve them. Luckily, I did not see any body-parts down there. However, just because I did not see them does not mean they weren't there.

For the first time, we could see how big that hole was. I stood there, speechless as I considered its size. We all stood in an almost perfectly-straight row at the ship's edge, leaning over the steel railing, saying nothing in our awe. How we had managed to stay afloat with something that big should be counted as one of the wonders of the world, and once we saw that torpedo hole it made the picture of what Israel did to us complete. Again, it can be likened to a woman who gets gang-raped and beat all to hell but doesn't realize how bad the attack was until she looks in the mirror and sees her blackened eyes, puffy lips and swollen cheeks.

There should have been cussing at the sight of the size of that hole, but by that time, we were simply worn out. As a result, our mood was very subdued. I could not make out what they were saying down there on the floor of the dock, but by their body language I knew they were just as amazed as the rest of us.

The workmen rechecked the timbers holding the ship in place. Once they were sure everything was safe and that there was no danger of the ship falling over, the gangplank was lowered to the floor of the dry-dock so that men could go down and inspect it. Like a line of ants marching in unison, I saw them come down, all wearing the khaki uniforms of U.S. Naval Officers.

Hours went by quickly and darkness soon overcame us. I rested uneasily that night. Most of the other guys insisted upon sleeping above deck because of the smell below.

The next morning, I prepared for a full-day's work. I dressed up in a clean uniform despite the fact I knew I would be up to my elbows in some pretty dirty work.

As soon as I had gotten dressed, I walked Lt. Golden, informing me that I had just won an all-expenses paid trip to Italy for a few days, courtesy of Uncle Sam. There was no reason and no warning, and they sweetened the deal by telling me it wouldn't count against my leave time. I assumed it was as an "atta boy" for all the hard work I had done before and after the attack.

The truth is, and this is the God's honest truth, it took everything I had in me, all my training and discipline to keep from saying, "NO SIR. I am not leaving this ship." But I knew this was not an option and was not about to dishonor or disrespect Golden. I loved and respected him like I loved and respected few people on the planet.

I followed my orders and got on the plane waiting for me. I headed to Italy, wondering if I would ever see my ship again.

The trip to Naples was quick and therefore I didn't have much time to reflect on what had just happened to me. I think at that time I

was still in a state of shock, so thinking was not really an option anyway.

As soon as the plane landed and I de-boarded in Naples, I wished like hell I could get back on that plane and go back to the ship where my duties were. That was where my “family” was, and the “family” had just suffered a terrible tragedy and being a “family man”, I felt I was needed at home.

I went with a buddy of mine who was one of the ship’s corpsmen, (basically a nurse.) He was one of only three guys (that I know of) aboard the ship who was Jewish and who made his Jewish heritage known by wearing a gold Star of David necklace. He told me while we were in Rome that he had been terrified he would be thrown overboard after we learned it was Israel who attacked us.

He and I were good friends. Generally, he was an easy-going guy who liked to joke and have fun. Now however, on this trip with him to Rome, he was a completely different human being. He was sullen and anxious. I just assumed it was because of the attack. The guy I knew was the life of the party but now he was as silent as death. I had great compassion for my friend, because I knew (or at least, I *thought* I knew) what he was going through. These were some pretty powerful demons we were dealing with. Only later did I learn that the demons he was dealing with were of a very different nature and of his own making. I had had very little to eat since the attack. Now in Rome, one of the world’s headquarters for delicious food, I sat down to what I was sure would be a good meal.

It was a nice outdoor restaurant with tables and chairs on the sidewalk. Italian music was playing and in general the people there lived their lives as if at that moment there wasn’t a care anywhere in the world to be considered. I ordered a plate of pasta, (fettuccine I think) with some tomato sauce and lotsa meatballs.

I had always had something of a magnetic pull towards the Italian people, as my best friends Rick Aimetti and Dullio Demori can testify, and here in Italy it was no different. I found them to be incredibly friendly and hospitable, especially since as an American I stuck out like a sore thumb.

Literally starved, considering I had had nothing substantive to eat in almost a week, I wolfed down the food like I was going to the electric chair. Then I sat there, sated from a wonderful meal and nursed along a glass of Italian red wine.

For a few minutes I forgot about who I was and what I had just gone through. In that moment, I was like any of these other people who did not have a care in the world. My stomach was full, there were beautiful women all around me everywhere I looked and no one - that I knew of - was trying to kill me at that moment.

And then in a flash, the dream came to an end and reality came crashing down, just like our ship had when the torpedo hit, lifting us up out of the water and then back down again like a meteor striking the earth...

...And I remembered...I was a sailor in the U.S. Navy, assigned to the ship, *USS LIBERTY* that had just been attacked for two hours by the state of Israel. Rockets. Machine guns. Napalm. Torpedoes. My best friends with their limbs and guts literally blown out all over the place. Me, fighting to stay alive while trying to save them. Admiral Isaac Kidd coming aboard and warning me that if I breathed a word of this to anyone he would see to it that life as I knew it would be over...And like a tidal wave, the guilt washed over me. Who was I to be enjoying myself like this, as my shipmates lay moaning in agony onboard the *USS AMERICA*, fighting for their lives?

Then suddenly, without any warning, the memory of the smell of death and fuel oil came over me. There was no slow build-up of this thing, it literally hit me like a tsunami and I knew what was coming. I started to get up to head to the bathroom, but as I stood up, I could feel the food I had just thoroughly enjoyed making its way back up. I thought I was going to pass out. Trying to concentrate on not falling over meant I could not devote any resources to keeping my chow down and so, with mortifying embarrassment, I threw up all over the place.

I don't want to be too graphic, but it was like a firehose. I threw up all over the table and even hit some of the people nearby. I fell back

down into my seat, defeated in front of the entire restaurant. I felt bad for myself, but I felt bad for those around me too. Who wants to eat when some guy has just shit through his mouth all over the place?

The maitre d' and a team of assistants from the restaurant came up to me with a wet towel and a pitcher of cold water. He washed my face and mouth with the same care and respect that a nurse might give to a wounded man. The assistants with him cleaned up the whole mess I made by grabbing the corners of the table cloth, pulling it all towards the middle and picking everything up in one motion to carry it out. I could not speak Italian but he spoke some English, so I asked him to please apologize to everyone in the room for me. Through my delirium I told him as best I could that it was not his fault - it was nothing he had done with the food and that I would be willing to pay for anyone's dinner which had been ruined by my accident. His response was gracious, one of the characteristics I've always loved about the Italian people -- "You are a patron here sir, our guest, and there is no reason for you to be embarrassed."

The smell of my vomit was powerful, no doubt, but it still was not enough to overcome the smell of my dead shipmates that would not leave my nostrils or my memory.

I wanted to pay for everything, but they would not let me. They wouldn't even let me pay the tip. There was not an unkind word or glance hurled my way from anyone, despite the fact I had just ruined quite a few peoples' evenings with my little performance.

We headed back to our room. I wanted nothing but sleep. More than sleep though, I wanted to wake up onboard the *LIBERTY* again, because that was where I belonged. As beautiful as Rome was and as much as I loved the Italian people, I simply didn't belong in paradise; at least not right now. I belonged with my shipmates, and every minute I spent away from them added to my fears that I would not see them again. I couldn't help but think that every minute I spent away from them was a sin I would have to answer for later, before God or before someone.

Several days later, to my great relief, I was finally getting on a plane for Malta. When I got onboard, I prayed I was heading back to my ship and not somewhere else. I started fearing that Admiral Kidd might have pulled a fast one and now they were going to send me from the paradise of Rome to the frigid hell of Antarctica. I prayed and prayed, and getting no response from God, I decided to ask the captain of the plane directly, since in those days the cockpits were open to the whole cabin. I let him know I needed to get back to Malta, where my ship and my “family” was. He was an American pilot and in the same confident, relaxed demeanor typical of American pilots, his response to me was, “Don’t worry about it sailor, that’s where you’re headed.”

Chapter 12--Kangaroo Court

Only later did I learn why I was sent to a foreign country where few spoke English.

After the plane landed in Malta, I took a cab from the airport for the dry-dock, carrying nothing with me except my bag. As I approached the ship, I could see the wounds she sustained, and with each step the wounds got bigger and uglier. I stood in awe of the damage and actually had to remind myself that I had been aboard that ship when all this had taken place.

I reached the point where I was ready to board. I did the regulation saluting of the flag at the stern and then turned towards the Chief Petty Officer who was the OOD (Officer of the Deck) at the time and said, “Request permission to come aboard, sir.”

Permission was granted and I stepped on board, glad to be home. The first thing I wanted to do was get together with some of the guys and talk. The first one I hooked up with was Petty Officer Third-Class, Jim Smith.

As soon as I got together with Smith, (Smitty, as he was called by the rest of us) he gave me an earful. While I was gone they had gone through the “gruesome task” (as he described it) of body recovery/identification of the fallen heroes in the CT spaces. As he

recounted it, men were trapped behind bulkheads and wrapped around steel beams in a scene not unlike what happens in the American Midwest after a tornado blows through and tears everything up. He said the bodies - despite having been young and virile - looked like they had aged eighty years. Their skin was bleached white and their heads were hairless. Some of them with no clothes as a result of being trapped inside a giant washing machine for almost a week while being sloshed back and forth in the warm salt water. He ended it by saying some of the men's bodies were intact and some were in pieces.

At the time, Smitty was the only one I knew who had been involved in the horrible task of body recovery/identification. Years later, I would befriend Ron Kukal, First-Class Petty Officer and Communications Technician who was the one in charge of the whole gruesome business. What details I had not learned from Smitty that day, I learned years later from Ron. What he told me would make the most nauseating Hollywood movie look like an episode of Captain Kangaroo. His job was to piece together the arms, legs, hands, heads, eyeballs, ears and everything else in the attempt at rebuilding what had once been a man. It was greasy, oily, smelly and horrible. He talked about trying not to dishonor your fallen shipmates by stepping on their body parts. His job was to try - TRY - to put them back together in such a way so that their loved ones back in America could give them a respectable burial.

More importantly though what I found out in the conversation with Smitty was that while I was away in Italy, an "investigation" into the attack had taken place. As he was telling me this, things in my mind began clicking into place as to why I had been sent to Italy with no warning. It didn't make a whole lot of sense to send me hundreds of miles away, just for the same r & r I could have gotten right there on the island without Uncle Sam having to foot the bill for airplane tickets and motel rooms. Furthermore, why would some lowly third-class petty officer be given the red carpet treatment somewhere else?

The only logical explanation is that they did not want me there in Malta while this "investigation" was taking place.

As it turned out, we were in Rome the same six days that the “official investigation” of the attack took place by the same khaki-wearing naval officers I had seen going up and down the gangplank a week earlier. As they were doing the investigation, there I was, one of the key witnesses to that attack, lollygagging in Rome, just as they wanted me to be.

And now, once again, I felt like that woman who had been raped and denied the chance of getting the justice she deserved by those skilled in corrupt political maneuvering.

I am sure now that it was my testimony to Kidd that was responsible for my Rome “vacation.” I let him know exactly what I had seen and how I felt about all of it; especially the machine-gunning of the life rafts by the Israelis onboard the torpedo boats. I am sure it was the life raft thing that did it more than anything else, because this was a war crime, according to the rules of the Geneva Convention. My testimony concerning the life rafts was the only part of what I had told him that had not elicited any follow-up questions from him.

Of the many “smoking guns” surrounding the events of that day, the shooting of the life rafts was a big one, and one not easily explained away. Israel’s defense for the last four decades has been that the attack on our ship was all a case of “mistaken identity”. The brains behind this operation knew that as an excuse this might fly, except...

...except the fact they had shot up the life rafts. No matter how much production they put into peddling the story about “mistaken identity”, it would all be pushed into the background if revealed - by eyewitness testimony no doubt - that these bastards shot up life rafts. No professional military does this. As I pointed out, it was a war crime to do something like this, akin to shooting down men who have thrown down their arms and surrendered. The people who were putting together this cover-up knew they would never be able to make this thing believable if the life raft business were made public, and this was the reason why I was “Romed” for a week.

An investigation that should have lasted six months was over and done within just six days. By comparison, the bombing of the *USS COLE* (attacked some 35 years later by Israel's enemies resulting in half the deaths as the *LIBERTY*) was investigated for many months.

Our duties changed now that we were in dock. There was no Sounding and Security for me and the others. Instead, we were forced to participate against our will in the cover up of the deliberate, murderous attack on our ship. We were tasked with patching her up and hiding what had been done to her so that no one in America would be any the wiser when we got home.

Repairing the ship basically meant cutting her into pieces, something that did not make any of us happy. Of course we knew the torpedo hole needed to be fixed - that was a matter of life and death - but as far as we were concerned, the rest of the holes needed to stay. Our feeling was that these holes were sacred wounds that needed to remain as a testimony to what had been done. Erasing them was just another slap in the face to us and what we had endured.

If we had had our way, we would have sailed the ship with all her battle wounds into the harbor of the most populated city in America with TV cameras as far as the eye could see so that everyone could see what had happened. Already, even at this early stage in the story, we needed the world to know that Israel was not the kind of friend that anyone anywhere wants or needs.

We tried protesting as much as we could without crossing any lines, but the mood from above was, "Shut up. Quit complaining. Patch the holes. Do your job. Captain says we're taking this ship home clean and mean."

And so, in the end, like gangsters working frantically to erase any evidence of their evil deeds by cleaning up the scene of a crime, we put the ship through an extreme makeover of sorts. The boys upstairs wanted to make damned sure that when the *USS LIBERTY* came sailing into some port in America, Israel's fingerprints had been wiped clean from the body.

With each hole I cut out of the skin of the *LIBERTY*, I felt I was degrading my dead and wounded shipmates. I felt I was part of the cover-up and was selling out both myself and America. As each hole was cut out, a plate was put over it, welded in place and then sanded and painted.

Work progressed fast. The yardbirds were everywhere like rats. Their work was fast and frantic, just like the investigation that would later rule the two-hour attack was all a case of “mistaken identity” on the part of the Jewish state.

McGonagle’s demeanor throughout all of this was straight-laced and one of total business. He had changed completely, almost as if he were one of those people in the movie, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

In this case however instead of his body being snatched it was his soul. As far as his demeanor went, it was like winter had arrived in the middle of summer. Now, our former captain was gone and replaced with someone more to the liking of Washington and Tel Aviv. I can only imagine what McGonagle got from Kidd after what it was we had received. It obviously destroyed him every bit as much as it did us.

Being that we were docked and not at sea, our work days were cut in half, which meant we were basically clocked out by mid-afternoon. Once done, we headed ashore to soothe our troubled souls by wetting our whistles at the local watering holes located in “Scum Alley”; the part of town where all the bars were. Before leaving the ship we were reminded sternly by the officers on board that we were not to talk about anything to anyone, and especially not to media people of any sorts.

To our surprise, there were not many prostitutes in Malta. As I said, it was a very religious country with churches or shrines on just about every corner. They obviously did not tolerate the world’s oldest profession as other places we had visited did.

In the bars, there were lots of British sailors, since Malta was still British-controlled at the time. In a scene surreal for its perplexity,

they would provoke us constantly by mocking what we had gone through; telling us we were a bunch of crybabies and that the ordeal we endured was nothing. They snidely characterized the damage to our ship as nothing more than a scratch. They smirked at the whole affair, despite the fact that the ship, with her thousands of holes, was in plain view for the entire town to see.

This was a big mistake on their part. They obviously wanted a fight and we were only too willing to oblige. We wailed into them, down to the last man and wiped the floor up with their asses like there was no tomorrow. Our attitude was, "We kicked your ass before, what makes you think we won't do it again?" We showed them no mercy. We beat them bloody until they were barely alive. Obviously, they had not learned any lessons from the last two times they picked fights with Americans, both in 1775 and in 1812.

This continued over the course of a few days. As soon as one group would get walloped, there would be another one there to take their place, and as I already said we were more than willing to assist them in their mission of getting their asses kicked. Finally someone got some sense about them and figured they had had enough of this and then, just like turning off a light switch, it was over.

In hindsight, I now realize there was something more to all this business than simply some wiseguys wanting a fight. Had it been an isolated event, where one smart-ass said the wrong thing at the wrong time and got his ass kicked, that would be believable. The fact that there were several of them (all fellow sailors, no doubt) taking turns over the course of two days in mocking what had happened to their fellow seamen, makes me think it was more like an intelligence operation aimed at getting us to spill our guts about what had happened. After all, Britain was a NATO ally of the U.S., and since we literally had been within a few minutes of launching a war against Egypt that would likely have brought the U.S.S.R. into it, that meant Britain would have been obliged by the terms of the NATO treaty to assist America.

Therefore, the likely explanation for all the ruckus in Malta between us and the Brits was that the higher ups in Britain's intelligence services wanted to know what the hell had happened out there, lest

they find themselves in another mess resulting from their alliance with America, just as they find themselves in today with Iraq and Afghanistan.

Both enlisted men and officers from the *LIBERTY* would sit together in the bars, and it was there where military decorum took a back seat. There was no “yes sir/no sir” business. Having gone through everything together the way we had, we were on a first-name basis with each other. We huddled together, not wanting to be around anyone but “our own”. We were suspicious about any new faces coming around wanting to get friendly and share our personal space. We were sure we were being watched. A few times at the bar, someone we did not know, speaking American English would ask us what happened to our ship. Our answer was stock - “Go ask someone higher up than us. We don’t know. It’s beyond our pay grade.” We assumed these guys were American Jews who wanted to know what we knew, or were perhaps seeing if we were following Kidd’s orders concerning the code of silence. They needed to know whether or not we were willing to remain loyal to a treacherous, disloyal government or whether there were “leaks” that were going to cause them trouble later. Even though we were nothing more than dumb enlisted men, we were smart enough to know that if we started talking too much, each of us would start running into “mishaps” that would silence us permanently.

The clean-up (cover up) continued day by day, and with each passing day we knew we were getting closer to going home. All the dead were gone, as well as all CT equipment. The fuel oil was cleaned off, except in our minds of course where it would remain a permanent part of the sights, sounds and smells burned into our memories.

The CT spaces of the *LIBERTY* were originally a cargo hold used to ferry military equipment such as tanks, jeeps, ammo, food and clothes to WWII Europe for American troops. Later, partition walls had been constructed for the use of the CTs. Now, following the attack and “extreme makeover” it was restored to its original state with the walls being knocked out by the torpedo blast. All the rubble was removed and the area was converted once more into one big room.

The room was completely washed down. We worked with scrub brushes, buckets of steaming hot water, bleach, soap and everything else we could find. However, no matter how much we scrubbed the place it did not matter, as the smell of death and oil remained as if we had done nothing. When it became obvious that we couldn't wash out the blood, the higher-ups - worried about anything pointing to Israel's mass murder - decided to camouflage it by painting the room with red paint.

Patching the torpedo hole was the most difficult task, because of its size. It was approximately twenty-two by thirty nine feet. The "ribs" (the skeleton upon which the steel plates making up the ship's outer wall rested) had to be replaced since they had been blown all to hell by the Israeli torpedo. I-beams were put in place and then steel plates were put over them like plywood sheeting on a stick house.

The stench of death and fuel oil was the only thing that remained. Neither new paint nor new steel sufficed in wiping away the act of mass murder. The walls of the room, like a giant tomb, were impregnated permanently with the smell of my shipmates' rotting corpses, and all our efforts at erasing this smell were a waste of time. It was almost as if the ghosts of these men refused to allow such a thing to take place.

As I said before, those in the ship's engineering department were furious over the fact that things were being patched up before heading home. When we got together in Scum Alley amidst those we trusted, (since spies from CIA, NSA or Mossad could be there at anytime) this was the main topic of discussion.

Then, just as expected, the orders came down from McGonagle--

"PREPARE FOR DEPARTURE"

The locks were filled up with sea water again. The yardbirds started removing the timbers holding the ship in place one by one. Once the timbers had been removed, we could see there were battle scars remaining that we could not get to because they had been covered

by the timbers. Paint was immediately rolled over them in yet another hurried, hasty attempt to put some rouge over a bruise.

And then, before we knew it, the ship was afloat once again.

Once we were afloat, I went down to the CT spaces with some other “khakis” - or officers. We had flashlights and checked every weld for leaks.

The Maltese yardbirds who had done all the welding were true artists. During the weeks they had done their magic, I would watch their skill with amazement, as they would do it all practically one-handed while remaining meticulous with detail. Now, the proof of their skill was obvious--not one leak, not one drop of sea water was visible, even after I had spent close to two hours down there, inspecting, inspecting and then re-inspecting. Now that the yardbirds' work was done, they left the ship.

At this time, I did not know exactly how many of the ship's crew remained. Ninety percent of the men in engineering volunteered to take her back home to America. There were a few CTs and a few boatswainsmates.

The locks opened and we were pulled out into the bay by a Maltese tug boat.

Leaving the drydock filled me with many different emotions. In the first place, it had been our refuge. There were no rockets, machine guns or torpedoes to deal with. It was the place where we licked our wounds and began the process of recuperation that continues to this day. The people of Malta were some of the most gracious, kind and generous people I've ever known. We made good friends with many of the yardbirds and townspeople of Valetta. We were like the guy in Jesus' parable who was beaten up and left for dead and they were like the Good Samaritan who took care of us.

Looking back at Malta as we left, we were filled with a sense of appreciation for its beauty. As anyone who has spent his or her life at sea will tell you, it is impossible to take your eyes off land as you head out. Just as Malta had grown larger and larger when we had

approached her weeks earlier, now she grew smaller and smaller, until she was nothing but a mere speck. At last, she disappeared completely. We were now officially at sea and headed back to America.

Chapter 13--Going Home

There is only one way in and out of the Western Mediterranean, which is through the straights of Gibraltar lying between Spain and Africa, and that was exactly where we were headed. We didn't push the ship too hard, as she had been patched up only superficially and we didn't want to risk opening old wounds that could wind up being fatal for all of us.

For many of us, the biggest fear as we hit the open seas was not mother nature and what she might throw our direction, but rather this hideous, two-headed sea monster we had faced on June 8 whose lair rested in Tel Aviv and in Washington D.C. Was there a submarine out there with a Star of David painted on the side like the torpedo boats, just waiting for the right moment to finish unfinished business? After all, I personally had gotten a death threat from Adm. Kidd, so why then would they not rid themselves of their troubles by sinking us once and for all, thus putting an end to any worries they might have about us staying quiet?

At the same time however, we welcomed putting as much distance as possible between ourselves and Israel. Every mile, every foot, every inch of distance we put between ourselves and our "ally" was like music to our troubled souls. We wanted to be as far away from those murdering bastards as possible. We trusted them just as much as sheep would trust the friendship of wolves who had not eaten in a few days.

The days at sea were uneventful. I did my normal routine of Sounding and Security watches. One of my duties was to check the CT spaces for any leaks or signs of future trouble.

I would go down there alone. It was one of the more difficult things I have ever had to do in my life. Every time I descended into this

silent grave - this killing field where so many of my shipmates had been murdered - I could feel the eyes of my dead friends upon me as I moved. I felt they could read my every thought and I could almost hear their voices crying to my spirit, *“Do not let what happened to us be forgotten, Tourney.”*

It was not just a one-time occurrence. This was something that happened every hour on the hour when I was on watch duty. I talked to the other guys such as Rick Aimetti, Dullio Demori, and others who were also on Sounding and Security. They said they had experienced the same thing. How was this possible, that we all felt the same thing and heard the same voices within our hearts and heads? It was the same horror for them as it was for me. Even now, forty-two years later, it is still with me; just as real and tangible as the fresh cup of tea I have every morning.

Since we had only a skeleton crew bringing the ship back home, we were all forced to take on jobs we normally did not do which for me included conning the ship's wheel. I was surprised at how quickly and comfortably I stepped into my new responsibilities. It didn't take long for me to learn just how far off course you could get by being only a degree or two off. Normally, if the guy conning the ship got her off course, the OOD (Officer of the Deck) would shit a brick and chew your head off. Now however after everything we had been through he would just calmly say, “Bring us back on course” and that would be it.

As the days passed, life was quiet and so were we. We were glad to be alive and heading home to our loved ones, for those of us who had any. We expected, as would normally be the case, that there would be a welcoming ceremony waiting for us. We mourned our lost shipmates but we did so privately.

Just as before, it was in the mess decks where we assembled, like a family room back home. Now however, sitting there in the same room that had been used as a hospital ward where men had cried out in agony and where I had given our XO (executive officer) Armstrong his last cigarette is something that leaves a strong impression on you. Now, eating in there was not the enjoyable event it was supposed to be, not the least of which was due to the

smell of death as much burned into the walls and floors as it was into our memories. When it was chow time we had to gag down our food as quickly as possible and then get the hell out of there as soon as we were finished if we wanted to keep it in our stomachs.

One thing we did discuss was the attack itself. Now, with as much as a month having passed, we could think more clearly. One of the things that amazed us all was the ferocity of it. We recollected how many times each of us should have bought it that day, but because of the grace of God, had not.

We were a band of brothers, especially those of us in engineering. Before the attack, we had all trusted each other to the hilt. Now, after what Kidd had put us through, there was a definite, measurable disquiet amongst us. We didn't distrust each other now, but there was this element of justifiable paranoia that each of us privately nursed for reasons of our own self-preservation. And although we did not distrust one another, we did mistrust the "khakis", as we now referred to the officer corps.

Even more heartbreaking though was the change in affections we had for Capt. McGonagle. Kidd left his stench of treason all over the ship and we saw how it changed McGonagle. He was for all intents and purposes dead to us. Gone. Not the same man we had known before the attack. Before that, he had been our hero. He was like a favorite uncle, always affectionate and concerned with our well-being, but willing to kick our butts if we got out of line.

Now we wondered where his outrage was. It was like getting pounced on by five guys who are beating the hell out of you and then you catch a glance at your dad who is watching it all and doing nothing.

After all, lying is a punishable offense in the Navy. Lying - or in this case, staying silent about an act of war against your own country - would get you into hot water in a New York minute. According to the training and bearing we received as sailors in the U.S. Navy, the thought of staying quiet about something like this was not an option, and if McGonagle had stood by us and let us know he was with us to the ends of the earth, we would have disobeyed the

silence Kidd had imposed upon us and even if it meant going up against the President himself or the bars of Leavenworth.

As we approached America's coast, we got to work getting things spiffed up. We didn't want to pull into port (to what we assumed would be a big welcoming committee) looking like a bunch of sorry SOBs. We made sure our uniforms were clean and pressed. Shoes were spit-shined. Dress-whites were spotless. Haircuts, shaved faces, sparkling teeth, clean fingernails, the whole nine yards. The only thing we could not gussy-up was our eyes, which had aged 100 years in just two hour's time on June 8, 1967.

With the sun coming up behind us at last, we saw the same shoreline our forefathers had seen when they came here hundreds of years ago. Our hearts pounded in anticipation as we got closer and closer to home. We were met by tug boats who pulled us in to what we thought would be a heroes' welcome.

To our great, devastating shock, we did not arrive in our home port of Norfolk, as we assumed we would. Instead, we landed at the Naval base in Little Creek, Virginia, which, as it's name implies, was small and very much out of the way, particularly to curious eyes.

It was to be a parade of disappointments, for as we got closer we could see the assembled crowd was quite small. We didn't expect to be treated like George Washington and his men after they had won the American Revolution, but the reception we got was no better than someone would get upon returning from a pleasure cruise. No appreciation for the fact we had gone through two hours of harrowing battle, nor that we had lost thirty-four men.

Yes, there were signs reading, "Welcome Home, *USS LIBERTY*". There were families there with tears in their eyes. But in general, the mood did not fit with what had just taken place. There was no respect, no sobriety. No honor, either for the dead or for the living.

But then, what more should we have expected? This was why we were rushed to dry-dock and the ship was patched up and painted in a hurry. They wanted to make sure there were no gasps from the

assembled crowd in whichever port it was we landed when we got home. The traitors who had set us up to be killed and put into motion a program of protecting our attackers wanted that ship shiny and pretty when it got home so that no one would know anything about what had happened.

As we eased up to the dock, I searched the few faces there for my wife. As it turned out, she was there with her parents, whom I loved dearly. They came aboard, and I got a warm embrace from both my in-laws. I wanted to open up to them about what happened, but then Kidd's words came back to haunt me.

In the course of our initial conversation, I found out they'd already been told about the attack. In fact, the info that had been given was that I'd been killed. For over a week, this was what they thought until the report had been updated to say I was alive but that I had been wounded.

As cynical as it sounds, I am sure my wife was as glad to hear that I was dead as she was devastated to hear that I was alive. When she came aboard the ship, she was cold to me; not at all the demeanor you would expect from a young wife who thought her husband had been killed in battle but now was alive and right in front of her.

There was a small reception on the dock for us. No band, no media, no big-wig Naval Officers or politicians. The party, if it can be called that, was over shortly after it began.

Had it been any other country besides Israel who had attacked us, (and especially if it had been an Arab country) the celebration would have gone on for days. Every media outlet in the world would have been there, as well as all the Navy brass, members of Congress and possibly even the President himself.

As it was though, because it was Israel who attacked us, the only noise to be heard was the water sloshing on the side of the ship. Prisoners coming off of Devil's Island would have received a warmer reception than we did. You'd have thought we were a ship of lepers for all the welcome we received. It was as if the boys in D.C. would rather have had a mourning party, grieving over the fact

that we had come home alive rather than being sunk to the bottom of the sea as they and their friends in Israel had intended.

It was somewhat of an embarrassment to show my in-laws around, because the reports they received were that we had been shot up bad. Now, here we were, for all intents and purposes a brand new ship looking like the worst she had been through was being hit with a rock from a sling shot. My father-in-law Millard would ask me questions about the attack and my response was always the same: "Can't say." To change the subject I encouraged him to walk around the ship and look for patches where there had originally been holes made by either rocket or cannon fire. I told him to look carefully, because if you didn't look closely you would miss them. The tour lasted for about an hour and then we decided it was time to go. I got my bag and pass and de-boarded the ship. I was given 72 hours of liberty - meaning leave.

An indicator to me that more had changed in America during my stay at sea than the fact that our government had been taken over by foreign, hostile forces was the way my wife Shirlene dealt with me. It had been three months since we had seen each other, but by the way she treated me, you would have thought I was some kid from her grade-school days she had always hated. As we climbed into my in-laws' car to head back home to Mt. Airy where they lived, Shirlene refused to get in and remained standing outside the car like a little kid. After several pleas from me and her mom, her dad finally got firm with her and told her to get in, which she did, but only with great reluctance. I knew then she did not love me anymore and had probably been messing around on me with someone else the whole time I was gone. The marriage was over. As it would turn out however, we managed to stay together thirteen years - "officially", that is.

On the drive back, the questions kept coming about the attack. Just as before, I had to give them the stock answer that most people give when they know that telling the truth is a liability - "No comment". Soon, they realized we were getting nowhere and the questions stopped.

Arriving at their home, I welcomed the feelings of safety and security that pervaded everything. My mother-in-law, Lessie, was a great cook and I was so relieved to be able to walk into a kitchen that carried the smell of good, home-cooked food rather than the odor of fuel oil and the rotting bodies of my shipmates.

The weekend passed quickly. Before I knew it, I was in my red Galaxy 500 and headed back to Little Creek. I arrived at the Naval Base and started making my way towards the *LIBERTY*. Surprisingly, as I approached her, I did not feel any of the dread I expected to feel.

The general talk of the town was that we had been through something pretty damned bad out there. As a result, wearing a *USS LIBERTY* patch earned you a certain amount of respect from the folks there.

I walked up the gangplank, saluted the flag and then asked for permission to come aboard.

For the next week, I got to work doing my regular duties in ship-fitting instead of Sounding and Security and Damage Control, since we were not at sea. There were always repairs of some sort to be made.

Lt. Golden asked me if I would rather do shore-patrol duties. That sounded more appealing to me, since being tasked with throwing drunks in jail meant more money and more excitement. I worked with one other guy, black and funny to be around but whose name I can't remember anymore. We were armed only with billy-clubs. We would walk into various bars and make sure that anyone in a U.S. uniform was conducting himself in a manner befitting a member of the armed forces of the United States. Once in a while, we would get someone who felt like mouthing off, so we would drag him back to the paddy wagon and take him to the jail on base where he was given a few days to cool off and reconsider his outlook on things. Some of the hard cases who remained uninfluenced by their stay would get the firehose with the suicide nozzle on it. They were bounced around like a pinball until they cried uncle and decided to play nice. After they broke down, we would hand them a mop and

bucket and make them clean up all the water used in washing away their bad attitude.

I did this for the next three months until my Navy career was over. When discharge time came, all the “lifers” came up to me to make their pitch for my re-enlistment. They offered me \$10,000 (an enormous sum in 1967) to re-up.

By this time, I had had time to reflect about what had been done to me. There was no way in hell I was going to re-enlist after what my government had put me through. As I mentioned earlier, I did not trust authority any further than I could throw an elephant with one arm. What was next in their black bag of dirty tricks against me? Send me out to sea and throw me overboard into shark-infested waters? They could have offered me any amount of money and it wouldn’t have been enough.

I would still have to remain on the ship for a while because of the paper work involved, but I wanted to be off that ship yesterday. I went to Personnel to see how soon I was getting off. The man behind the desk motioned towards a stack of papers a mile high, indicating there was no way for him to go through all that just to find out when I was going to be freed from what was (for me at least) a prison of sorts. I threw \$25 on the table.

“When am I scheduled to leave?” I asked him again.

His response was quick, as he shoved the money into his pocket -

“Tomorrow.”

The next morning I got up, had breakfast in the mess hall which still stank of my dead shipmates and fuel oil. I choked down what I could and then said my goodbyes. As I was about to leave the ship, I was reminded that for the next 24 hours (officially-speaking) I was still in the Navy and that if I got involved in any trouble, the penalties associated with the military would still apply.

I walked down the gangplank, left the *LIBERTY* and never looked back at her.

Chapter 14--Humiliation Revisited

A lot of guys, once they get out, are so disgusted that as soon as they hit the dock, they throw the bag holding all their clothes in the water. I didn't do that, but kept all my stuff. This turned out to be a waste of time, since my first wife burned it all later anyway.

I regretted later that I had never looked back at the *LIBERTY*, considering everything we had gone through together. At the same time though, it was because of everything we had been through together that had kept me from looking back.

I got in my Galaxy 500 and headed to Mt. Airy, North Carolina, where my wife was waiting for me. We went to live with her parents. After ten days of this, we decided there were better horizons in Denver, Colorado where my family was. For someone wanting to put as much distance as possible between himself and the Navy, Denver and it's mile-high mountains was about as far away from the sea as you were going to get.

Once getting into Denver, we found an apartment and I got a job working for a company delivering tanks of soft drinks for restaurants. I loaded and unloaded the trucks as they came and went. As crazy as it sounds, I loved my job, since ninety-nine percent of the places where we delivered were bars.

Here I was, fresh out of the Navy, delivering soft drinks to bars where (after delivering our tanks) we were offered free beer by the bar owners. By the time we clocked out at 4:00 pm, you can imagine what kind of shape we were in. As much as I loved that job, I know now in looking back that it was not a good job for me to have. Having all that free alcohol, after what I had just been through and what I was about to go through was not a good idea.

By this time, my wife and I were co-existing more like roommates than husband and wife. I can't blame her, since I was a different man than I had been when I left for that last, fatal cruise aboard the *LIBERTY*, and it showed.

I trusted no one. If a door slammed or a car backfired, I would jump a mile high in terror. I was an angry young man. At the same time, I felt like I was invincible because of having cheated death so many times during and after the attack of the ship. I would pick fights for no reason. It didn't matter to me whose ass got kicked, whether it was his or mine. It was just the thrill of being in the middle of conflict that gave me a rush like a drug. This went on for years. In the meantime, I bounced from job to job.

As night would approach, I would go into something of a panic attack, because this was when the memories of what I'd gone through were the most vivid.

After several years of this however, the memories retreated into some dark corner of my mind. I stopped thinking about the whole thing to the point where my entire experience on the *LIBERTY* became something of a faint memory. I actually forgot what date it had taken place, believe it or not.

Before I knew it, three years of my life had flown by. We were no longer just Mr. and Mrs. Phillip F. Tourney but were now mom and dad, as our two-year-old daughter, Frankie was an established fact.

At the time, things were rough here in the states (economically-speaking) and I couldn't find work. As such, we were dependent upon churches and food banks to eat. For me, living on the dole was totally against every fiber in my soul, given that I had worked my whole life. I decided I needed to make a move, and believe it or not this turned out to be re-enlisting in the Navy.

It was 1970. Vietnam was going on and they were desperate for guys. I called the recruiter and naturally he told me to come on down. Three days later I was again the lawful property of Uncle Sam.

As much as it was against everything in me to join up again with the same government that had been an accomplice in the killing of my shipmates and the cover-up, I did not have much of a choice. At least now I had a paycheck and my wife and kids had health insurance.

I was transferred to Norfolk, Virginia, where I was given temporary housing and a temporary job. I didn't know where I was headed or what I would be doing.

While in Norfolk, I meet up with Smitty. He had remained in the Navy. At the onset of us running into each other again he made sure to remind me that had I taken his advice back in '67 and re-upped then that I would be \$10,000 richer.

After he and I finished talking, I headed back to my barracks. It took a full two months of me doing mundane work, but I finally got my orders and was told to prepare to head out to Long Beach Naval Station. I had been assigned to the *USS MADDOX*, DD-731, of all ships, the very ship which would wind up being "attacked" and thus become the leading edge of the Vietnam war escalation.

I arrived at Long Beach and reported for duty aboard the *MADDOX* in March, 1970. By this time I had received several medals (including a Purple Heart) as a result of what had taken place onboard the *LIBERTY*, but I decided against wearing them when I boarded the ship for duty. I didn't want anyone asking me anything about the *LIBERTY* - not that I could have said anything about it even if I had wanted to anyway, since I had been ordered by Kidd and the SOBs over him not to breathe a word of it.

The *MADDOX*, like the *LIBERTY*, was clean. The crew was friendly and I felt very comfortable being there. I was assigned to ship-fitter's work, the same kind of work I had done on the *LIBERTY*. Our job was to give reservists the opportunity to brush up on their Navy skills, which meant that people were always coming and going onboard the ship. We would simply cruise up and down the West Coast with no hassles and no headaches.

Soon after reporting for duty, my wife wrote, saying she wanted to move out to California to be closer to me. I did not love her anymore, but I was crazy about my daughter, so I agreed. It was a good job for me. I could leave the ship at 4:00 pm and the rest of the day was mine. It was basically like having a regular 9-5 job, as opposed to other guys who were at sea and didn't get to see their families for as long as six months at a time.

Shirlene arrived with my daughter and we made a go of it.

I loved my daughter, Frankie, but not my wife. When we were first married, we had both been kids, but when I got off that ship and returned to civilian life, I had made the transformation into an old, angry man. On June 8, 1967, our marriage was doomed and the thirteen years we managed to hold it together were not easy. How can you make your spouse understand what you went through in cleaning up the body parts of your best friends and then being ordered by your government not to say a word about it to anyone - including her?

This was not something particular to just me. There isn't a survivor I know of who had a normal family life when he got home. It seems that the death and destruction Israel and our government rained down on us on June 8, 1967 had doubled, then tripled, then quadrupled, and kept multiplying generation after generation like the waves caused by a rock being thrown into a lake. It was not only thirty-four men who were murdered by Israel, but also family after family after family.

Chapter 15--Dignity Denied Again

I had been onboard the *MADDOX* for approximately a year. As I said, our main job was providing a training/reorientation opportunity for reservists, and every time a new crew came onboard, we had personal inspection.

In all the previous inspections, the only medal I wore was my National Defense Medal, which is something everyone gets just for being a member of the U.S. armed forces. One day though, for whatever reason, I decided to wear my other medals.

Why I did it, I don't exactly know. Possibly it was the conversation I had had earlier with a good friend of mine aboard the ship. He had asked me where I had been in my previous Navy career and of course, I couldn't tell him. He was puzzled at this, unable to comprehend why a sailor in the U.S. Navy couldn't tell anyone on what ship he had been before.

Getting ready for inspection, I looked in my personal locker. I saw all my ribbons and medals and considered the fact I was not able to proudly wear these awards I had earned, literally with my own blood, sweat and tears. Finally, after looking at them for what seemed an eternity I said “To hell with it,” and began putting them on my jersey. I took great care in making sure they were all in their right places and positions. It was almost half an hour before I was satisfied that everything was ship-shape.

I went up to the main deck, got in line and prepared myself for inspection.

The Executive Officer was new to his job, having been aboard for only about a month. He was a graduate of the Naval Academy in Annapolis and now was performing what was only his second inspection since having come aboard as the new XO. As soon as he came up on deck, everyone stiffened and came to attention. Then he got down to business giving out awards to the reservists.

He began going up and down the rows, giving personal inspection of the men standing at attention. When he came to me, he stopped and his face turned into something I had not seen since Admiral Kidd talked to me like a dog on the *LIBERTY*. He ordered me to walk out in front of the entire crew, which consisted of probably about 90 men. He addressed them all with the words, “THIS IS WHAT YOU CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT BE IN THE U.S. NAVY. YOU DO NOT DESECRATE YOUR COUNTRY BY WEARING MEDALS OTHERS DIED FOR.”

He then turned to me and started yanking my medals off, one by one.

“Bronze Star With V For Valor...FOR WHAT?!!” he screamed, “Purple Heart...FOR WHAT?!! Vietnam Service Medal...FOR WHAT?!!” He ended by tossing them, one by one, on the deck.

To call it humiliating doesn’t even begin to describe it. I had been with all these guys for a year, had done my job as directed, and now I was being treated like a dog all over again.

The XO ordered me to drop to the deck and pick up the medals he had thrown down. I couldn't believe the disrespect he had shown them. I did as ordered and picked them up. At this point, he ordered me to report to Captain's quarters. I did a regulation about-face. It was quick, but it seemed like an eternity, because as I spun, I caught a glance at the stares directed my way. The hatred in the eyes and on the faces of the guys was not just noticeable but measurable.

I reported to Captain's quarters as ordered, standing at attention. The XO was not present, but Captain was already apprised of the situation somehow. He got nose to nose with me and screamed, "WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU TRYING TO PULL ON MY SHIP?! I'LL HAVE YOU OUT OF HERE WITH A DISHONORABLE DISCHARGE WITHIN JUST A FEW DAYS SAILOR."

I stood there and responded as respectfully as I could, "Captain, apparently you haven't checked my records. Every medal the XO just ripped off my jersey and threw on the ship's deck, I earned."

"BULLSHIT!" was his response. I was boiling over with anger, yet kept my temper under wraps.

"Sir," I said, "just read my personnel record."

He retrieved the records right then and started reading over them. The change coming over his face was as visible as day turning to night.

As he read my file he realized how big the mistake was he had just made. I could see that now he was thinking, "How am I going to fix this?"

He turned to me. "Why the hell haven't you been wearing your ribbons and medals, sailor, and especially during inspection? It's part of your uniform, and without them you're out of uniform." After a few minutes he said, "Yeah, I heard about the *LIBERTY*."

I told him I was ordered by a two-star admiral not to breathe a word about what had happened to me, an admiral who had gotten his orders from an authority no less than John S. McCain, Admiral, United States Navy, Commander in Chief United States Naval Forces Europe, and that if the good Captain of the *USS MADDOX* had an issue with me being out of uniform, he should take it up with them.

Then, to my great surprise he changed the subject to something completely unrelated. "You need to go see a doctor and have him look at your head so you can be evaluated" he said. I thought this being the first thing out of his mouth was strange, especially after I had made it clear that persons no less in importance than CIC McCain were involved.

Being that we were assigned to a Naval base, there was a psychiatrist on duty. I went to see the doctor on base and as soon as I sat down, he started things off with a single question.

"What's the problem sailor?"

"I have nightmares..." I told him, "I have trouble sleeping".

He was a doctor and I knew that with him there would be this thing known as confidentiality that doesn't exist in other places in the military, so I opened up to him in ways I was not able to with others.

I spent at least an hour telling him the gory, grisly details about what I went through on June 8, 1967, telling him things I had never told anybody - neither to my wife nor even to God Himself. He was a doctor who had sworn an oath to heal people and I thought I could trust him.

After my testimony, my heart lay bare open...I was in the most vulnerable position I had been in since that day we were attacked. The "good doctor" then turned to me -

"Bullshit sailor," he said, "I know all about the attack on the *LIBERTY*. It lasted only a few minutes and there were only nine

guys killed and a few wounded. Besides, Israel wouldn't do that to her friends. It was a case of mistaken identity, just like the investigation concluded."

At this point, he got up and announced our session was over.

The truth is, I was glad as hell to get away from him, because as soon as he finished his statement, I felt like I was sitting in a den full of writhing, poisonous snakes.

I headed back to the *MADDOX*. Several days later, Captain called me to his quarters and informed me one of three options lay before me: Number one--I could stay aboard the *MADDOX*. Number two--I could get permanent shore duty until my enlistment was up. Number three--that as early as the next day, I could walk off the gangplank into the civilian world with an honorable discharge.

With a wife and kids to feed and no job, my choices were limited. I told the Captain I wanted to stay aboard the *MADDOX*, provided that the XO apologized to me in front of the crew for the way he had dressed me down. With unmistakable fury on his face, Captain's response was "If you think I am going to disrespect a graduate of the Naval Academy in favor of a Second-Class Petty Officer you're crazy. It ain't gonna happen."

After what I had just been through and knowing it was probably a taste of what was to happen to me again and again, I decided to walk off the gangplank, pack up the wife and kids and head back to North Carolina. I wanted out of this Navy now and forever.

I packed my things. As I was preparing to leave, my division officer - having read through my file and learning the truth - came up to me, stunned and speechless. When he did finally speak, his words were of complete puzzlement and amazement. I was a genuine war hero and no one knew. He asked me why I had kept quiet and my response was simple-- "I had no other choice." He begged me not to leave and promised to let the rest of the crew know the real story, which he had done already. Once the other guys had found out, they begged me to stay too, but there was just no way.

This latest episode brought back all the feelings I had felt when Kidd had treated me like a criminal and for me there was no going back.

They gave me the honorable discharge as promised, but the barb attached to it was that they didn't want me back, classifying me as "RE-4" meaning "not recommended for re-enlistment". This is a stigma you carry with you for the rest of your life and yet another knife in my back. My military career was officially over. Even if I wanted to, I could never again be part of the same body of men who had fought the British under George Washington and won their freedom nearly 200 years earlier.

In my dress whites and wearing all my medals over my breast, I walked off the ship. Even as I was leaving, the guys continued to beg me to stay, but I just kept on walking.

Had I thought for a minute that I would be going through this all over again, just as when Kidd took me apart piece by piece, I would have stayed on welfare and never re-upped. There would have been more dignity in getting handouts than in what I had just gone through.

Throughout all of this, I learned an invaluable lesson about how things work in the U.S. Navy, which is that all commissioned officers - of whatever rank - will throw you under the bus if it means something good will come their way by doing so. First it was Kidd and now it was this. They could have righted this wrong, but chose not to.

Now, wearing my dress whites and all the medals and ribbons that a combat-wounded veteran is entitled to wear, I began the slow march back to square one - meaning a wife and kid to feed, no job, broke, no insurance, nothing.

We headed back to North Carolina.

Chapter 16--Rough Waters

If I had had a bad attitude before, now it was diabolical. I hated all authority. If someone got in my face in any sort of way, I had two words for them, and they weren't "happy birthday".

As a result, I moved from job to job to job.

I had been drinking before, but now I was doing it a lot more, as it had become something of a pain killer for me. Shirlene was the one doing the work earning money and keeping the family together.

We were living in a trailer on some land her folks had given us. I had finally landed a good job doing electrical work as a lineman. I had had no experience or training in something like this, but after what I had lived through in just two hours on June 8, 1967, the thought that I could get killed in an instant doing electrical work didn't even occur to me. I, like many of the *LIBERTY* survivors I got to know later, believed I was bulletproof and that nothing could hurt me.

One Thursday night, Shirlene and I had a fight. I can't remember over what. During the argument, she said the same thing to me she had said a thousand other times during other arguments, namely that the world would be a better place for everyone if I just hit the road.

As I said, I had no more patience for anyone treating me with any kind of contempt, including my wife. When I awoke the next morning it was Friday, and that meant it was payday. After work, I went to the bank, cashed my check and bought a one-way ticket on Eastern Airlines to Denver, Colorado without telling anyone anything.

My layover was in Chicago. While I was in the terminal waiting for my next flight, a voice over the PA announced I was being paged and would I please pick up the courtesy phone. To my surprise, it was Shirlene.

"What the hell are you doing?" she asked.

My response to her was simple -- “I’m doing exactly what you told me to do - making the world a better place by leaving.”

Realizing she had said this one too many times, she tried throwing water on the fire of her own making that was now threatening to consume everything.

“I didn’t mean it. I know I’ve said it a hundred times but I didn’t mean it...”

It made no difference to me. The cup had reached its limit and now was overflowing.

“The last time you told me to leave was last night, and that was the last time you’re ever going to tell me to leave” I said.

I hung up the phone and headed towards the waiting area for my next flight headed for Denver. Before I knew it, I was surrounded by cops with their hands on their side-arms who wanted to “talk” to me. They escorted me to a private room in the airport. Once the door was closed - just like what had taken place with Kidd and with the Captain of the *MADDOX* - the questions in harsh, accusing voices started flying in my direction like the rockets of June 8, 1967.

“Where’d you get that much money?”

“It’s payday and I just cashed my paycheck. Here’s the pay stub.”

“Why are you so dirty?”

“I just got off work.”

I explained it to them as best I could, “My wife told me to get lost for the millionth time, and this time I decided to give her what she wanted.”

What I now realize is that the cops were not out to make my life miserable that day. My wife, who had successfully tracked me down to Chicago’s O’Hare Airport, no doubt told them I was

dangerous and needed to be stopped before getting on that plane for the wild, wild west. The cops let me go and I headed for the waiting area.

I got on the plane and soon landed in Denver. It was a weird emotion...I was "home", meaning the place where I had grown up and where most of my family was, but "home" was really where my wife and daughter were, 1,000 miles away. I called my brother and he picked me up at the airport.

I settled in quickly and found whatever work I could. I gravitated mainly towards physical work like construction in an attempt to get the seemingly endless river of aggression out of my system. I sent home what I could for Shirlene but it was not much.

Six months later, I was sitting at a bar drinking a beer after a long day of work when all the sudden the door opens and in walks my brother. Trailing behind him was my wife.

She looked around, saw all the women in the bar and said in her southern drawl (with more than a little disgust for me) "Well, sure looks like yure havin' fun." My first impulse was to glare at my brother, Wayne "Benedict Arnold" Tourney.

She sat down next to me and as if six months had not passed, (or perhaps because of the fact that six months had passed) started wooing me back to North Carolina, reminding me we have a beautiful daughter and a life together.

I missed my daughter terribly, and so Shirlene did not have to twist my arm or threaten to kill me as Kidd did in getting me to go back with her. We bought a used car and started heading back east.

As soon as I got back to North Carolina, I landed a job doing brick work. It was hard work but steady, which was exactly what I needed. It lasted about three years, thus becoming one of my longer jobs. I was breaking my back with work and trying to make ends meet, but the economy was not good and work in the eastern part of the country paid only slaves' wages. I decided that we needed to head west where the wages were much better.

This was not the only reason for me wanting to get out of the south. Without going into too much detail, I did not appreciate some of the “friendships” my wife maintained in that part of the country and Colorado was a long ways away from some of these “friends“.

We moved back to Colorado where work was better for me. Now we had another little one on the way. Before we knew it, we were the proud parents of yet another girl named August.

For the sake of our daughters, we tried our best for the next two years to make it work. However, some conclusions are just as plain as day and eventually we could not deny that despite our best efforts, it was just not going to work.

I came home from work one day and opened the door to discover a completely empty house. As soon as I had left for work that morning, a giant moving truck had pulled up and the guys went to work picking the carcass clean of everything. My wife, without letting me know her plans ahead of time, had packed everything up and sent it all back east.

Now, as I stood there looking at the empty house, my wife pulled up in a truck with the kids inside and informed me she was going back to North Carolina.

“Who’ve you been talkin’ to?” I demanded of her. I knew this was not just her gig, but something she had cooked up with someone else.

As much of a shock to the system as it was, I knew it was meant to be. For a long time, we had been husband and wife only on paper and for my part, I knew it was over.

And even though I knew it was over, there was no way I was going to allow her to drive my two daughters across the country without a man to protect them. I told her I would drive them there and she agreed.

For whatever reason - possibly because we knew we would no longer be forced to live the lie anymore - the closer we got to North Carolina the better we got along. Better, in fact, than we had in years. I brought her and the girls safely back to her parent's place and then headed back to Colorado alone. I was relieved to be relieved of Shirlene, but devastated at losing my daughters. For a good year, the longing and guilt I felt over not seeing my kids was unbearable.

We got separated and then divorced. I arranged for child support payments through the state. A month after the finalization of the divorce, Shirlene was married again. The thought of there being another man in the house with my girls was like a knife in my gut. However, just like most other things since June 8, 1967, there was little to nothing I could do about it.

A few years after we had split up, I got a phone call one day from my oldest daughter, Frankie. She told me she wanted to see me as soon as possible. I could hear something urgent in her voice as we spoke. I got her a round trip ticket to Denver arriving the next day.

The first day she got there, she told me something that caused a rage to boil over in me I did not know was possible. According to my beautiful daughter, her new stepfather had cornered her one day, kissed her on the lips and tried sticking his tongue down her throat. She told her mother about it, who obviously did not care. She was only about fourteen at the time and was telling me this story through tears.

All I could think about was me getting a gun, a big one, and going after him. The thought of someone preying on my daughter like this threw me into such a murderous rage I thought the top of my head was going to blow like a volcano. For Frankie's sake though, I maintained my composure as best I could.

During the week she was there, she also told me that my youngest daughter, August, had been adopted by Shirlene's new hubby with neither my consent nor consultation a mere month after we were divorced. They had tried to get Frankie to do the same but she had refused. The reasons for them doing this were simple - as soon as

the girls were adopted they could be claimed as dependents on tax forms while at the same time, they were getting my child support payments.

After Frankie had been with me for a week, she went home to North Carolina. No sooner had she arrived, that she called again, saying she needed to get out of there and that she wanted to live with me.

For those who haven't experienced it, the joy you feel in having your own flesh and blood yearn for you like this is indescribable. Finally there was someone in my life who loved me and was not out to destroy me in some way. I was happier than I had been in a long, long time. I bought her another ticket for that same day. In the meantime, she grabbed a few clothes and her school transcripts and got on a plane for Denver. I picked her up at the airport. As soon as we got home, I called her mother in North Carolina.

"Do you know where your daughter is?" I asked her.

"I think she's at school," she said in her typically stupid way.

"No," I said, "She's here with *me*, and I'll tell you why. She told me your new husband has been putting his hands all over her and tried sticking his tongue down her throat. She knows she's not safe there."

My ex-wife's response was predictable. "You SOB! I knew I should never let her go out there with you in the first place. I knew you'd fill her mind with a bunch of shit!" She threatened to call the cops and have me arrested for kidnapping. I had already spoken with the cops here, apprising them of what was going on. They told me that since Frankie was fourteen, it was up to her to choose where she wanted to live.

Shirlene wanted to talk to Frankie. I handed her the phone. Despite the fact that my eardrums had been blown out during the attack in '67, I could hear her screaming like a banshee. She called her daughter a traitor, told her I was no good and that she had to come home immediately. Frankie had already made up her mind,

however, that she was staying with me indefinitely. Upon hearing this, Shirlene hung up the phone and never once tried to get a visit or anything else with Frankie. As far as she was concerned, her daughter did not exist anymore.

My daughter, the love of my life, coming to live with me was like winning the lottery a hundred times in a row. I was on cloud nine. It's not an easy thing for a man to leave his kids behind on the other side of the country. Her being there with me made me feel like I had been given a second chance at life. I got her enrolled in high school, where she made friends right away.

As overjoyed as I was at her being there, I now had something else to worry about, namely bringing Frankie to terms with the fact I was about to get married again. She was very fragile at this time and wanted to be the only woman in my life. I knew there might be problems between her and Lisa, the girl I was dating at the time, and not because there was something organically irreconcilable between them, but because of the law of the jungle concerning territoriality.

A few weeks before Frankie came out, I had asked Lisa to marry me. We had decided we would elope and not go through the business of having her parents pay for her wedding, since they had done it for her once already.

I was in between two women here - my daughter, who I loved like nothing else and Lisa, who I also loved like nothing else. There was no way I was going to lose Lisa, but there was no way I was going to upset Frankie either, so the solution for me was simple. I told Frankie that Lisa and I were going away for a weekend trip to Las Vegas to have some fun playing the tables. In the meantime I asked my brother, Al, to be my best man. He drove all the way from North Dakota to Vegas.

As soon as we got together in Vegas however I forgot all about getting married and just wanted to have fun with my brother. Three days went by and Lisa (understandably) was getting impatient. Finally, on Monday, after three days of goofing around, Al came knocking on the door at 4:00 am saying, "It's time to get married!"

We all headed down to the courthouse and waited for it to open. After it did, we paid our \$25 for the license, headed over to the chapel and then, “sha-zam”, as Gomer Pyle used to say, we were husband and wife.

I kissed my wife and then, having been married for less than a minute, my first act as a husband in making my wife angry was to pay the preacher for his services with gambling chips, since I had blown all my money the previous weekend gambling.

We headed back to Colorado the next day as Mr. and Mrs. Phil Tourney. When Frankie saw me, she asked in that southern drawl she had picked up in North Carolina, “Daddy, where you been?”

I knew I had no other choice now than to come clean with her and tell the truth, the whole truth and nothin’ but the truth.

“Honey, I went to Las Vegas and married Lisa.” I waited for the inevitable tornado of female emotions I was sure would destroy everything in its path, as it always seems to do.

To my surprise and great relief however, my daughter, the light of my life merely got a little smile on her face and said, “Daddy, I could’a told ya that. Why didn’t you jes’ tell me?”

I apologized to her, which she accepted with no problems, and that was that.

Chapter 17--A Blast From The Past

Three years went by quickly and happily. My daughter and wife were getting along great. Frankie was doing well in school and Lisa was working as a billing clerk for a local company. I was doing construction at the time - stucco work, specifically - the same thing my dad had done.

And then one day as I was getting ready to head out to work, the phone rang. It was my mom.

“You gotta see today’s issue of *Rocky Mountain News*,” she said. “There’s a big story in it about your ship.”

Rocky Mountain News was the big paper published out of Denver. I headed down to the local store and got a copy. I stood there outside the store and opened the paper. As best I can remember, the headline was, “*USS LIBERTY* Survivor Talks About the Attack”. I saw the story involved Stan White, a Communications Technician (CT) who had been onboard the *LIBERTY*.

I read the piece very fast. The piece - very tame, considering the subject matter being discussed - mentioned that there was an association of *LIBERTY* survivors.

As I stood there reading the story, I felt a rush of emotion come over me I had not felt in years. My heart was racing and I was breathing fast. For eighteen years - just as ordered - I had not breathed a word about this to anyone.

I headed back home. Lisa was already gone for work and Frankie was in school. Once I got in the house, I called the newspaper and got hold of the editor. I told him I was a *LIBERTY* survivor and wanted to get hold of Stan White. Several hours later I got a phone call from him and we started talking.

I had not talked to another survivor in almost twenty years. I was flabbergasted, and that’s putting it mildly, that someone would be gutsy enough to go against the orders we had been given by Kidd to stay quiet. He told me there was a book out about the attack, written by Jim Ennes, one of the officers wounded in the first run of Israel’s attack.

I started calling around the local bookstores to see if they had a copy of the book. One did, so I high-tailed it down there to get myself a copy, not thinking at all about work.

Getting home with it, I sat down in a chair and started skimming. I was too excited to maintain the concentration necessary to read a big book like this, so I started looking for names, people I knew and whatnot. I went to the index of the book and looked in the “T”

section to see if I was mentioned. To my surprise, I saw that I was. I started flipping to the pages mentioning me.

Reading someone else's account of what had happened to me brought back memories and feelings I had not allowed myself to experience for literally a generation. I was overcome with emotion - sadness to be exact. I closed the book and cried. Like a dam bursting, the thoughts about my friends, what had happened to them and all the horrible things I was forced to do that day came flooding over me.

My sadness immediately turned to excitement, as I realized there was a book and an association of survivors. Had things gone differently and had my mom not called me, it is more than likely I would not be here today writing these words for my own book. Indeed, the Lord works in mysterious ways, as the old saying goes.

The next emotion I felt was one of determination. In an instant I realized there was indeed a higher power in the universe besides my bullet-proof self and that this higher power had something in mind for me. In an instant, I realized that what had happened to us had to be righted and fixed. I was feeling energy within me I had never felt before and that I did not think was possible to feel.

Chapter 18--Total Recall

My poor wife, not knowing about the freight train about to come crashing into her life, came home at 5:30, just like every day.

She had just left a marriage where she had been beaten up regularly by a nutcase for eight years. Now, three years into a new marriage, she was about to get walloped again, only this time with a history lesson she did not expect.

She walked in the door and saw me sitting amidst a sea of newspapers on the kitchen table. She stopped, and with her purse over her shoulder simply stared at me in a confused way, since usually she got home before I did. Her first thought at seeing me

must have been that I had been fired or that I had found a new vocation in life, which in truth I had.

Before she had time to hang her purse or even go to the bathroom, I was all over her, guiding her towards the table and to the chair waiting for her.

“Sit down,” I said. “I gotta tell you something.”

Again, no doubt she must have assumed I was about to break bad news to her. Usually when a man say to his woman “I gotta tell you something” it means he’s lost his job, found a new girlfriend, that the law is after him or he’s in some kind of trouble which his better half would rather not deal with.

“Read this and then tell me what you think,” I said to her.

She read quietly. It only took her a minute, because it was not a long article. After finishing it she looked up at me.

“Sounds to me like a lot of guys got screwed, and not in a good way,” she said.

The moment of truth had come--

“Honey, I am one of those guys. I got screwed, and not in a good way.”

She put her purse down and then scanned the items lying on the table. I handed her my military records. Not only had she never seen these before, but she was completely unaware of the fact that I had ever served in the military. I felt a little more than slightly guilty about giving them to her now, three years after we had been married. It was like showing her pictures of me and another woman together.

“I want you to look at these, everything, and after you’re done, I’ll tell you why I never told you about this before.”

My whole life lay before her. All my medals, all my commendations. My DD-214, (my personnel file.) In short, what I showed her was that the man she had married three years earlier was - in many respects - not the man she married three years earlier.

My beautiful wife stood there quietly as she listened to me. I told her everything, things I had never even told God in my most private moments.

“Man, did you guys get screwed, and not in a good way,” she said again.

I could tell by her demeanor she felt differently about me now, but not in a bad way. (Not like finding out that the person with whom you’ve shared your most intimate space has leprosy.) Instead, it was one of compassion and admiration. She had never served in the military herself, but her father had served in Korea, so she knew something about what being in combat meant to the unlucky men who went through it.

“I never thought my love for you could increase, because I love you more than I thought I could ever love a man,” she said, “but the one thing different is that I am much prouder of you because of what you did.”

In the span of just a few hours, I was reunited with my shipmates and my wife was embracing and loving me in a way I had never imagined. It just doesn’t get any better than this. That was a good day, for sure.

Now that I had gotten my letter of approval from the Commander in Chief, (my wife) I got busy. I started by writing letters to Congress. Everyone. Lisa would read what I had written and then re-type it all. We would lick the envelopes and the stamps together and then send them on their way.

The response letters might as well have been written by the same person, or rather, by the same robot. Actually, they might as well have been written by the same people who tried to murder me June 8, 1967, for all the compassion they contained. Amidst all the fancy

words and the flowery language that so-and-so Senator and so-and-so Congressman used so as not to piss off a constituent, the basic gist of what they were saying in their response letters was, "We don't give a shit about what happened to you or your shipmates. Thank you very much, Israel is America's ally."

I wrote thousands of letters like these. For me, every one of them was like punching an iron-clad fist into the jaw of the monster that had attacked us. This was my way of fighting back in a way I could not before. Like a woman raped in her youth who relives the moment of her shame every night in later years while thinking to herself "Dear God, if only I could go back, this is what I would do," I was, in the same way trying to make up for lost time with the letters I wrote to Congress.

The problem, however was that - just like the day we were attacked - I still believed that the America of today was the America of George Washington's time; a time where patriots rose up and did the right thing when their well-being and the well-being of their loved ones was threatened by a foreign power.

This was not the case, clearly. The people running things in our nation, both at the time of the *LIBERTY* attack as well as today have as much in common with the great men who founded this nation as the pop singer Madonna has with the Virgin Mary. As it turned out, every stamp I bought, licked and pasted was wasted money, wasted spit and wasted energy. Every sheet of paper might as well have been used to clean up something messy. All my pleading to those elected to serve us, the American people, was nothing more than pearls cast before swine.

It was late summer when I had first read the article featuring my shipmate, Stan White. Months of writing letters finally brought me to late winter - March to be exact. St. Patrick's Day was coming up. In Denver, they had one of the largest St. Patrick's Day parades in the country. Lisa and I got to work making up a big sign that read--

Remember the USS LIBERTY

34 Killed, 171 Wounded by the Government of Israel

June 8, 1967

I went down to the parade very early. I was wearing my Purple Heart, Bronze Star and other medals on my jacket. I knew I had to be with some sort of group if I was going to be allowed to march in the parade. I mingled around and noticed a Color Guard in front associated with the Vets. The guys had been in WWII, Korea and Vietnam. I started talking to one of the Vietnam vets, a guy wearing camos and chevrons indicating he had been an E-6, meaning a Platoon or Staff Sergeant.

I knew that the Grand Marshal of the parade was none other than Pat Schroeder, Democrat Congresswoman from Colorado. Her district was chock-full of rich, influential Jews who were all supporters of Israel. I wrote her on a constant basis and every time I did, I would get back a smart-assed letter, two sentences long saying, "We've already been through this before. If there is anything else I can help you with, let me know." At the bottom of each of these letters, she would scribble a small smiley face, as if she were a grade-school teacher and I was one of her students. Not only would I write letters, I would call her office in D.C. trying to speak with her, only to be hung up on or be left waiting on hold forever. In Denver, she had an office and I would personally go there when I knew she was in town.

Now, my intention was to corner her where there was no "buffer" between her and this highly-aggrieved, combat-wounded American vet.

I needed to find a spot where I could march. However, none of the other vet groups wanted me. As soon as they saw "Israel" on my placard, there was an instant change in their demeanor. The fact that I was wearing ribbons proving my service for America meant nothing.

As luck would have it, I finally found someone who would let me march. It was the same Marine sergeant I had seen earlier wearing the camos. He told me he had heard about the *LIBERTY* and asked where I would be marching. I told him no one would touch me with a ten-foot pole. Being a true American, he said, "You march right next to me, sailor."

There's a good reason why the motto of the Marines is *Semper Fidelis* - "Always Faithful".

It was sunny that day, but being a mile high in the Rockies meant it was cold and blustery. The parade route was approximately ten blocks long and it was huge.

As the parade began, I saw Pat Schroeder in a car, waving to people as if she really gave a damn about them. Then came the color guard, five men in a straight line bearing the flags of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard, followed by the U.S. Flag and three rifle-bearers. Then came the vets themselves, with yours truly right in the front row, dead-center.

We walked at a slow pace. People waved flags and called out their appreciation for us as vets, "God Bless You!" being the most common. We marched about ten blocks in forty-five minutes. As we got towards the end, my Marine sergeant friend leaned over and said to me, "When we are twenty feet away from the podium where the Master of Ceremonies will be speaking, run up right behind the color guard and lift your sign up high so everyone can see it."

We approached the podium. To my great shock, as the Master of Ceremonies announced the various vet groups, he read my sign out loud, word for word -

Remember the USS LIBERTY

34 Killed, 171 Wounded by the Government of Israel

June 8, 1967

The sound echoed across the city of Denver and it was electrifying.

As soon as the announcer had said this, I noticed Congresswoman Schroeder in the convertible ahead of us turn her head like it was a radar dish and lock on to me. Her face was one of surprise, then recognition as she no doubt thought, "Oh shit, it's that guy who is always calling me." Then her expression changed into one of panic as she realized I was within spitting distance of her. We kept marching another block and made a left turn, the point at which the parade dissipates and the marchers go their own way. As soon as I

got around the corner, I broke from the group and made a b-line towards Schroeder who was about twenty feet in front of me. I jogged to get up to where she was, but before I could get there, she jumped out of the convertible, and like a criminal making a getaway, hightailed it into another car waiting nearby and then sped away.

I found my Marine sergeant friend, shook his hand and thanked him for what he did in letting me march. He wished me luck and told me to keep doing what I was doing. I found my truck, put the sign in the back and headed home.

Lisa was waiting for me when I arrived. I told her everything that had happened and she was not surprised. Mind you, this was early on in the game when we were not as wise to the ways of the world as we are now. Even then, we were not surprised at what had happened. Looking back, if I were to march in a parade today, I would make up the same sign, except that the word “killed” would be replaced with a better, more fitting word. “Slaughtered”, “Murdered” - take your pick.

Stan White was really the only one from the *LIBERTY* crew I kept in touch with. Then one day I got word there was to be a gathering of *LIBERTY* survivors hosted by the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee. Lisa and I boarded a plane and made our way towards DC. the very place where McNamara and LBJ had ordered the rescue planes to return to their ships after being launched to save us. Our plane landed, we jumped in a taxi and headed towards the meeting place, the Washington Hotel.

We got out of the cab and walked into the lobby. I started scanning the area for familiar faces, keeping in mind that this was twenty years later and people no doubt would have changed. The first one I recognized was John Hrankowski, who had been in engineering like I had. We chatted for a little while and he told me where everything was, what would be going on and when.

All totaled there were about a dozen survivors there. I saw my good friends Aimetti and Smitty. To say that it was good seeing

them is like saying it's good having water doused on you when your clothes are on fire.

The interesting thing is that the guys all appeared okay. They did not seem to suffer from any kind of PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) or anything like that. For the most part, we just laughed the way guys who played football together in high school do at class reunions. Little did I know at that time what kind of nightmares lay in front of us.

On Sunday morning, there was a meeting with all the attending survivors. We all sat down for about forty-five minutes to strategize how we were going to try and get the truth out about what had been done to us. Stan asked me if I would be willing to take on the job of public relations officer for the LVA. (LIBERTY Veterans Association) I eagerly accepted the job, which entailed - as he described it - writing letters, letters and more letters. This, of course, was something I had gotten good at over the course of the last year.

The meeting broke up. We all said our goodbyes and headed to our respective homes. As soon as Lisa and I got home, I got busy with my new job and started writing letters in trying to drum up interest in our story.

Chapter 19--A Man of Letters

On the flight back home I reflected on everything that had just taken place. For twenty years, I had kept this hell on earth bottled up inside me to the point I actually forgot the date the attack had taken place. Now, seeing some of my former shipmates again and being a part of something working against the conspiracy of silence forced upon us years ago made me feel like I had been born again.

Not long after we got home, I started receiving cases of Jim Ennes' new book. There were at least twenty in each case and I know I got as many as twenty cases sent to me. My job was to hand them out to whomever I could. I took them to libraries as far as 100 miles away, asking them to put the book on their shelves. I started doing

the math, and realized that someone with deep pockets was paying for all of this. These were thick, hardcover books published by Random House. At \$20 a copy, (at that time) that meant that each case was close to \$400. I had received at least twenty cases, which by my math, amounted to about \$8,000. I was not the only one getting them, either. Through various conversations, I estimated that at least ten or fifteen other guys got shipments as well, although if they were as large as mine I couldn't say.

I asked Ennes who was paying for all this, since there was no way that he or even the LVA could afford to have this many printed just to give away. He would never tell me who was footing the bill. My guess was that the same Arab group that invited us to D.C. was paying for it, which didn't bother me a bit. My feeling was, "Let him get the money from wherever...as long as it results in our story being told, I'm happy."

Meanwhile Lisa and I got to work. I would scribble out letters and Lisa would make sense of them by fixing the spelling and grammatical errors (numbering in the millions) and then type them up on an old typewriter we had. She did all of this for me while being six months pregnant and working full time. She never complained. In fact, it was during this time period while working together that we became closer to each other than we ever had.

One of the things that excited me more than anything else in doing all this was that the letters I was writing were not just for me but for my entire crew. I felt like I was part of something bigger than myself and something sacred. Every letter I signed had "*USS LIBERTY Veterans*" at the bottom of it. Seeing this made me proud and gave me a sense of honor which I had not felt since wearing the uniform.

The more letters I wrote and the more responses I got, the angrier I became. I had heard the term "dual loyalties" before, but never really appreciated its meaning. Now, seeing these bastards in D.C. bend over backwards, forwards and every other way to protect the people who murdered my shipmates on June 8, 1967, the meaning of the phrase was brought home to me in a way up close and personal. I would argue however that there was nothing "dual"

about it, as their only allegiance seemed to rest with the same foreign power that had attacked our ship and killed 34 of my friends.

Nevertheless, because I was tireless in my efforts to get the story out, I was moving up in the chain of command in the LVA. My position as the one in charge of Public Relations was an appointed one, done by those who had been elected to the board, which included a President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. As elections approached, I decided I would run for a spot on the board. The way it worked was that you did not run for a particular office. You ran for the board, and if you were elected, there was another election where the different officers were chosen.

As it turned out, I was elected to the board and then made treasurer - a position I definitely did not want. I accepted it all the same, though, because at least this way I would have a vote whenever something important came up. As best I can remember, I held the position as treasurer for three years. I ran for the board during the next election and was re-elected again. This time I was made Vice President.

One day, sometime in the mid 1980's after being elected president of the LVA, I got a phone call from a reporter writing for a Washington D.C.-based newspaper called *The Spotlight*. Her name was Trisha Katson. She wanted to know everything about what had happened to the *USS LIBERTY*.

We talked every day for a month, sometimes as long as three hours at a time. In the meantime, she was running weekly stories based on our conversations concerning the attack. Then one day, she called and asked if I would be willing to come to D.C. and speak at a conference the paper was sponsoring. She read off the list of some of the others scheduled to be there. When I heard that the nightly news anchor, Tom Brokaw was one of them, (and hoping he would take an interest in our story) I knew I had to go. This was the best opportunity to get our story out that had ever come along.

I thought it was important to get the okay from the LVA before committing myself to it. They were smart guys and I didn't want to

do anything they thought might damage what we were trying to achieve. Although he was not on the board, I consulted Jim Ennes, author of the book *Assault on the Liberty* that had contributed a lot to getting the LVA started. His response was that I *could not* go; that they (The Spotlight) were nothing but Jew haters, anti-Semites and every other kind of unfavorable, uncomplimentary thing.

I disagreed with him. My position was that any exposure was good exposure. I had personally written thousands of letters to Congress and received nothing in return except the middle finger. Now here was a newspaper with hundreds of thousands of paid subscribers rolling out the red carpet for our story and I was supposed to say, “Thanks, but no thanks”? I don’t think so.

I was puzzled as to what Ennes could possibly be worried about. After all, our first meeting in D.C. was sponsored by an Arab group, considered public enemy #1 as far as Israel was concerned, and yet he did not have any problem with us being associated with them.

I told Ennes I was going anyway. He was furious and immediately after our conversation he got on the phone and like some gossip old woman started complaining about me, saying I should be thrown off the board and shunned. The other guys, prodded by Ennes, started calling me and voiced “their” concerns as well. I put “their” in quotations because I am sure that were it not for Ennes inserting himself into the equation (when he was not even on the board) they all would have been just fine with me going to D.C.

The next thing I knew, I was on an airplane headed for D.C. I was very nervous because I had never spoken in front of a large crowd before and from what I had been told it *would* be large. I was greeted at the airport by Trisha. On the way from the airport to the hotel, we talked about the conference taking place the next night, discussing when I would be speaking and for how long and all that.

The next night came and the conference with it. My nerves were just about as bad as they were the day we were attacked. Before I knew it, I was up there in front of a big crowd of people. This was going to be one of the first, if not *the* first public talk ever given concerning the attack on our ship in the past twenty years. I had

written out notes to try and keep everything straight, but as soon as I looked out at a sea of people staring at me, I froze. I looked down at my notes, trying to follow them but in the process, I just ended up stumbling through my words.

At last, realizing the gravity of what was taking place, I put the note cards down, took a deep breath and just started to speak to them, one on one, as a survivor of the *LIBERTY* to his fellow countrymen. I told them everything that happened. I described the savagery of the attack, or as best as I could remember it at that time. I looked around at the audience and noted that all those in attendance spanned every generation, young and old.

And when I saw before me a cross-section of America, I used language I had never used before.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” I said, “this attack was not just an attack on my ship...it was an attack on you, your children, your grandchildren and all Americans. It was an act of war no different than the attack on Pearl Harbor.”

I continued...“I am not here to be a Jew-hater. If that’s how it appears, then I’m sorry, but they did this to themselves. My reason for being here is to let them, you and the world know that no one - *no one* - should be allowed to get away with premeditated, cold-blooded murder, *not even Israel*.”

The applause was as loud as a hurricane. It made me feel good, for no other reason than that I felt I had done something for my shipmates, both living and dead but more so for the dead, because this was something they could not do for themselves. As I came down off the podium, I was swarmed with well-wishers reaching out for me, shaking my hands, slapping me on the shoulder and telling me their names. (Unfortunately, I cannot remember a single one of them now.) Willis Carto, the brains behind the whole *Spotlight* operation, came up and thanked me for my speech. This was the first time since we were attacked that someone actually *wanted* to hear about what had happened to us.

The next day, I had an early flight back to the mile-high city. I was glad to leave D.C., a den of thieves, a haunt of demons and the place where LBJ and McNamara had set up me and my shipmates to be murdered by the Jewish state on June 8th, 1967.

Chapter 20--Reverberations

On the Oct 19, 1987 edition of the *Spotlight* - a mere week after I had spoken at the conference - there was a picture of yours truly right on the front page and a story about my speech. Within a few days of that paper hitting the streets, I got a phone call from Willis Carto who informed me he had a letter of great interest which he needed to forward to me. I asked him to send it and then a few days later, it was in my hands. The letter read as follows:

Dear Mr. Tourney,

Congratulations on your courage in your interview in Spotlight of Oct 19th, 1987. My brother Ted and I made a substantial contribution to build a new library in Grafton (Wisconsin) which entitles us to name the library. Instead of naming it the "Grob Library" as suggested, we would like to call it "The USS LIBERTY Memorial Library". Before doing this, we would like to have the reaction of the families of the murdered as well as the survivors.

Very Truly Yours,

Benjamin Grob

After reading the letter, I had to sit down and gather my thoughts. I didn't know who to call first. I was elated and overwhelmed with emotion over the idea that *my* words had touched so many different individuals, one of whom wanted to dedicate a library in honor of our ship. As strange as it sounds, it was both one of the happiest and saddest days of my life.

The first person I called was Jim Ennes. I wanted to shove this down his throat and make him see how wrong he had been before.

I wanted to celebrate the fact that I had not followed his “sage” advice, but instead had gone to D.C. and spoken at the conference which had resulted in this great thing. I read the letter to him word for word. At the end of it his only response was, “These two old men probably don’t have two quarters to rub together. You still made a mistake going out there. There’ll never be a library built by *these* people, rest assured. The people who read the *Spotlight* are nothing but nuts and Nazis.”

I contacted Ben Grob at the address on the letter I got and in the following weeks, after some back-and-forth over the U.S. postal system, I got to be good friends with both him and his brother Ted. One day Ted called me and said, “You have people out here, talking to the mayor and the media.”

I was shocked. I had not been told anything about this, despite the fact that I was on the LVA board. Then, in an instant I understood. Like a shark smelling blood in the water, Ennes had smelled money and notoriety for himself and had completely cut me out of the picture, even though I was the reason all of this was taking place.

Apparently, after I read the letter from Ben Grob to Ennes, he started doing some research and in the process found out the Grob brothers were not the poverty-stricken untouchables he described them being in the phone call to me but rather wealthy and successful industrialists. He then sent “his guys” to Grafton, Wisconsin to meet the mayor and every other person of influence in the town. John Hrankowski and Joe Meadors were there, knocking on doors and introducing themselves as survivors of the *USS LIBERTY* and I - as a board member and the person singularly responsible for the Grob brothers taking an interest in our story - had not been made aware of any of it.

Suddenly, the fact that the Grob brothers were readers of the *Spotlight* and members of Liberty Lobby (the parent company which owned the paper) did not matter to Jim Ennes a wit. He found out the two brothers were multi-millionaires and that was the only thing that mattered.

My first reaction was anger. Here was this pompous SOB, Ennes, lecturing me, telling me I couldn't associate with "so and so" on the sole basis that "so and so" was a "Nazi," a "Jew-hater" and everything in between and then, in the next minute, he is schmoozing up to this same "so and so" the second he finds out that "so and so" is rich beyond his wildest dreams.

I reached for the phone, ready to call Ennes and chew him a new one. Then, remembering what this was all about and that the main thing was getting the story out so my fallen shipmates would not be forgotten, (in the form of a new library being built) I put the phone back in its cradle and bit my tongue. Hard.

Giving credit where it is due, I have to tip my hat to Hrankowski and Meadors. While they were in Grafton, they did a superb job in speaking to the media and to whomever else would listen.

As surprised as I was that Ennes had maneuvered against me behind my back, I was even more surprised at what happened in Grafton by some of those living there. Apparently, there was a rather large Jewish community in the surrounding area and once they heard that a library - IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA of all places, where freedom of speech is enshrined in the very first amendment of the Bill of Rights - was going to be named after and dedicated to a United States ship, the *USS LIBERTY*; attacked by Israel on June 8, 1967, they went ballistic.

Demands came pouring in to the mayor's office and the newspapers. Like the machine gun bullets I had to dodge twenty years earlier in trying to save my friends, complaints and accusations of "anti-Semitism" were rained down upon the whole project and everyone associated with it. Jim Grant, the mayor of Grafton along with John Dickman, a prominent local businessman stood shoulder to shoulder against the assault.

One day I got a phone call from Ted Grob who informed me there was a "crack in the dam". The "crack" he was talking about was an upcoming vote in the town council on whether or not the public library would be named after the *LIBERTY*. He told me that he had called every one of the council members and told them that if they

voted against naming the library after the *LIBERTY*, all the money which he and his brother had promised would be withdrawn and every penny of it would be given to the LVA.

All of the sudden, the crack that was there yesterday was shored up like the bulkheads in the belly of the *LIBERTY* had been twenty years earlier. The new library would be built and named after the ship. I was getting regular updates on the project, complete with photos of the library as it was being built.

The date of the dedication was approaching quickly. Persons of note were contacted and asked if they would be willing to travel to Grafton and speak on behalf of the library and the survivors. One of these speakers included California Congressman Pete McCloskey, who gave one of the more heartfelt speeches of his life.

What was even more dramatic than the speeches given that day were the steps that had to be taken to ensure our safety. As many as forty police officers from several different departments were out in force. There were SWAT teams on rooftops with sniper rifles and bomb-sniffing dogs. Their police handlers were patrolling the area and the town was cordoned off to prevent vehicles from going places they weren't supposed to be on that day.

The reason for this enormous police presence in what was a very small Wisconsin town was that several threats on the lives of the *LIBERTY* survivors had been made. We don't need Sherlock Holmes or his assistant Watson to figure out who made these threats and why. The dedication of a public library honoring the memory of those who had been aboard our ship, both dead and alive, was yet another thorn in the eye of the people who tried to sink us that day.

Since Ennes and his boys had stepped in and hijacked this thing that had come about because of my going to D.C. and speaking in front of a bunch of "Nazi's and Jew-haters", I was completely cut out of the whole dedication process. I was not asked to speak. In fact, I was not even given a place on the stage, despite the fact I was president of the LVA.

That was okay however, because I got an even better place - right next to Ted and Ben Grob, the persons responsible for this wonderful testimony to my fallen shipmates. Adding honor to honor, Lisa and I were asked to stay at the Grob brothers' home while the other guys were in motels somewhere else.

As a final gesture to the Israeli interests who were outraged over the library, someone had slyly made sure that the huge brass sign in the front of the library announcing its name had "*USS LIBERTY* Memorial" in small letters while the word "Library" was in huge letters. As proof that they were intent upon seeing this thing through to the end, the Grob brothers had a new sign made where the name "*USS LIBERTY*" was prominently displayed for the paltry sum of \$50,000 additional dollars.

After it was all over, I received the following letter from Ted Grob, thanking me for all I had done in helping to bring this about.

Dear Phil,

It amazes me how much publicity we receive due to the new USS LIBERTY Memorial Public Library in Grafton. Just a few days ago, a lady phoned and made an appointment to meet Ben and me. As Ben is still in Florida, I put it off for a few weeks until Ben is here again. The lady's husband is in the Navy and read about it in their Navy publication. They also want to see us and see the articles. Even though the name of our library made us some enemies, more important is it made us some friends. Which reminds me to thank you for your part, because without you, the name of the new Grafton Library would not be USS LIBERTY Memorial Public Library. Of course, credit is due to many, and each played a part in the name to be born and to be adapted. This was the Spotlight with an article of your speech at one of their meetings. Without your speech, we would not have known that there was a USS LIBERTY Veterans Association. My brother, Ben, got the idea to name the new library USS LIBERTY Memorial after reading your courageous speech. Credit also goes to Jim Ennes Jr. for writing the book Assault on the Liberty from which we knew what it was all about. Then, the name would have never stuck if it was not for

the village president, James Grant and others like John Dickman. To you and all those others, our heartfelt thanks.

Sincerely, your friend,

Ted Grob

Shortly before his death, Ben Grob sent me the following handwritten letter dated December 15, 1999:

Dear Phil,

Thanks for your letter. The USS LVA must understand that we are under ZOG (Zionist Occupation Government) and inform the people before it is too late. To save the Christian heritage and the USA! Washington is a waste of time. Inform the brainwashed! I have a short time to live. I am terminally ill.

Best wishes for all of you.

Ben

This was an example of the kinds of “Nazis” and “Jew-haters” Jim Ennes and his hirelings had wanted me to avoid. For Ben and Ted, these two men who had immigrated to the U.S. from Sweden many years earlier, the murder of thirty-four American servicemen was the last straw. As we can see from Ben’s final letter to me, he understood how much danger America faced as a result of these people. In honor of my friend’s request, I am doing exactly as he said - “informing the brainwashed”.

Chapter 21--Bushwhacked

Upon returning to Colorado, I was exhilarated over the new library, but at the same time disillusioned and disheartened over some of the events which had taken place.

The first and most obvious disappointment was how we vets were treated by our own government yet again. Never leaving a man

behind is as much a part of the culture of the U.S. armed services as saluting a superior and what they did to us at the library dedication was the equivalent of burning the flag. For me, the U.S. Government's refusal to send a color guard or even a simple representative from the U.S. Navy was just another confirmation that the country I had sworn an oath to protect twenty years earlier was gone and had been replaced with something else. Lisa and I talked extensively on the flight back about what we had just learned concerning the power of the Israeli lobby in this country. The U.S. government would bend to their wishes over something as seemingly insignificant as a library in the American Midwest. As the old saying goes, we have the best Congress money can buy...the difference in this case is that the money used is not in dollars, but in shekels.

This, unfortunately, would not be the only time that Lisa and I would sit on an airplane coming back from some *USS LIBERTY* event feeling dazed and confused.

As I already pointed out, Lisa and I were fanatical about writing letters. After years of getting either no response or else the semi-polite middle finger, we finally seemed to have gotten a bite from a big fish. As it turned out, we - the survivors of the *LIBERTY*, were invited by none other than the President of the United States at that time, George Herbert Walker Bush, to visit him at the White House.

The timeframe for this was perfect, since we were already going to be in D.C. for our semi-regular reunion. The fact that we were going to be there on the exact date the President wanted to meet with us was seen by us as a sign from God that good things were going to happen. Wheels started turning in our minds. "Maybe this is it," we thought to ourselves. Here we were going to have a private meeting with the President. No other opportunity like this had presented itself to us before. Surely, being an American he would take our plight to heart and would do what needed to be done. The secret would be broken now for sure. The guilty would pay the piper, the righteous would rejoice and our fallen friends would finally - after more than twenty years - be able to rest in peace knowing that their country had come through for them in the end

After arriving in DC for the reunion, all of us (close to 50 survivors along with wives and kids) all boarded a bus and headed towards the White House, the very same location where LBJ had perpetrated his horrible treason against us. We approached the gate to the White House where a uniformed Secret Service agent stood with a clipboard in hand containing the day's scheduled appointments. The driver told him who we were. Obviously, they were expecting us, because they waived us right through.

We parked and were directed towards the Rose Garden, of all places, where Bush had held so many press conferences. Despite the fact that we were going to be meeting with the President, we were not frisked or checked for weapons. We were right on time.

The heat and humidity were nothing short of apocalyptic, something not made any better by the fact many of us gussied up for the occasion with ties and coats so we could sport the ribbons and medals we had earned for our actions the day we were attacked.

Nevertheless, we stood there in the Rose Garden, not complaining - just waiting patiently for our President and all the good things we were sure would come from this meeting.

Minutes ticked by one at a time. The scheduled hour came and went but we did not worry. After all, he was a busy, important man, certainly he would get to us. Why else would he have asked us to come if he didn't intend to see us? Besides, he was a former Navy pilot, which meant we were all family.

About every fifteen or twenty minutes, one of his people would come out and tell us the President was running behind on his schedule but that he would be here soon. We accepted this in a friendly, understanding way and merely bided our time.

We passed the time talking and trying not to let the heat get to us. Captain McGonagle was there with us, in his dress white uniform and wearing his Congressional Medal of Honor around his neck. Although McGonagle was the only one there wearing the

Congressional Medal of Honor, the place was packed with war heroes.

Finally we saw the presidential limousine pull up to the White House. Bush had been at a parade of veterans returning from the First Gulf War which was why he had been late. As the limousine drove by, he waved at us through an open window.

Our spirits were a mile high. We were on cloud nine and in seventh heaven. This was it, we were sure - or at least our stomachs were, because they were a flurry of butterflies.

Shortly afterwards, the door from the White House leading out to the Rose Garden opened and we waited with baited breath for the President to come walking out. Instead, it was Brent Scowcroft, his National Security Advisor and Chief Of Staff, John Sununu. Both of them were smiling like two cats who had just eaten a bowl of mouse soup.

Our expectation was that they were coming out to tell us the President would be here in a minute. They closed the distance between us and then dropped the bomb on all of us just like it was June 8, 1967 when we realized our government would not stand by us.

Scowcroft and Sununu, like a duet doing a vaudeville number, informed us the President was “too busy” to meet with us. Then, they started “making nice”, shaking our hands, apologizing for the fact that we had been left waiting for two hours - the exact amount of time we were left out there when we were attacked by Israel.

The disappointment on McGonagle’s face was as unmistakable as if he had been kicked in the groin. He was dying inside, we all knew it, although he tried his best to hide it from us. I was sure he would break down in tears, but he did not.

The anger welled up in me in a way I had not experienced in a long time. As it did, it brought back a lot of other memories I had not let myself remember in a long time as well, most notably the smell of

my dead shipmates and the fuel oil. My wife Lisa nudged me. When I turned to look at her, I saw she was weeping.

“I am so sorry,” she said through her tears and sobs.

“Don’t worry about it honey,” was my response, “We’ve been abandoned before...this is nothing new.”

June 8, 1967, we were left out there alone in the middle of the Med. Now, we were abandoned in the middle of the very heart of our nation, and not just in Washington DC, but THE VERY WHITE HOUSE ITSELF. It was obvious to me that the “fix” had been put in. Someone from one of the pro-Israel groups had gotten wind of what was to take place and had gotten to Bush, grabbed him by the short hairs and told him he could not do it. It was obvious to me he was taking orders from a higher power, and I don’t mean God or the U.S. Constitution or the American people. It made me so sick I thought I might throw up.

Then, when I thought it couldn’t get any more nauseating, it did. Scowcroft and Sununu, like 2 game show hosts who had to give the losing participants a consolation prize, announced we were the proud winners of a White House tour. My legs felt like they were filled with lead, just as the bodies of my shipmates had been on June 8, 1967.

My impulse was to announce that they were the proud winners of my middle finger held two inches in front of their faces and high in the air for the whole world to see, then take my wife by the hand and leave. However, I was not about to embarrass my fellow shipmates. As soon as Scowcroft and Sununu had done their shtick, they were scurrying back into the protective confines of the White House. At this point, a tour guide came bearing our “prize”.

The tour can be summed up thus: *“Wham, Bam, Thank you ma’am, and leave the \$2.00 on the nightstand.”*

It was like being at a funeral for all of us. Our spirits were totally destroyed. We left the White House and went back to the business of our reunion. It would have been better had we never gotten any

response from the President at all. In the blink of an eye, he had disrespected the dead, the living, and all the heroes of all the wars this great country has fought. Now, I would rather have shaken hands with Benedict Arnold, whose treason against America was miniscule compared to what had been done by every president since LBJ, including this one. I was relieved to be back on that bus and leaving this den of thieves.

As bad as he was though, he was only to be outdone, and by none less than the very fruit of his loins, George W. Bush, probably the worst president in the history of the United States, who took America into two disastrous wars for Israel's benefit which to this date have resulted in the loss of over 5,000 of our brave men and women serving in uniform. At the very moment this is being written, they continue to die for the same country that perpetrated an act of war against America forty-two years ago on June 8, 1967. The attack that began that day has continued ever since.

On the plane ride back home to Colorado, we revisited what had just taken place. Lisa broke down in tears again, to my great surprise and sadness.

"I really don't know what you went through - other than what you told me, something I can never know. But today, I know what it is like to feel violated after the way we were treated. I will work harder for you than I have before in my life to get your story out, because now it's personal to me. Very, very personal."

Then, like a small child who has cried herself out, she laid her head on my shoulder and fell asleep. I remained awake and wondered to myself what I could possibly have done in my life to deserve a woman such as this.

Before we knew it, we were landing in Denver.

Chapter 22--Other Gatherings

We got home and I got back to work writing letters. I wrote to every single member of Congress, both the House and the Senate, as well as the President, the Vice President, the Department of the Navy, the Naval Criminal Investigation Services (the same body responsible for catching Israeli spy Jonathon Pollard) and telling them I was eyewitness to mass murder aboard a United States ship. All the responses I received were of the same vein; politely giving me the middle finger and telling me to take a long walk off a short pier.

The years rolled by. By this time, Lisa and I had a daughter and two sons. We moved out of Ft. Collins and headed for the hills further west. In the meantime, I was out there all the time pushing the *LIBERTY* story on anyone with two ears.

As much as this book must by virtue of its subject matter, focus on the bad things associated with the attack and aftermath, I have to say at the same time that were it not for the hell of what we went through, I would not have met some of the finest people I have ever known, so now let us take a few minutes and discuss them.

One of the greatest honors I experienced as a result of being president of the LVA, was the friendship I acquired with former Navy pilot and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Thomas Moorer, who also worked tirelessly in trying to get our story told. I am sure that at least part of my affection for Adm. Moorer was based on my desire to rebound back from the disdain for authority I developed after the attack and also after the way I was treated aboard the *USS Maddox* by the XO and the Captain.

He was the first recipient of the *USS LIBERTY* Award, something we in the LVA cooked up in the interests of recognizing those who had worked in trying to get the word out. The day we gave him the award, we were in D.C. at the Army/Navy Club having lunch. Here I was, a former Navy grunt who had never made higher than E-5, sitting next to a four-star flag admiral, and he wasn't the only one. Lots of admirals and generals were there to honor him. Not many people know this, but the F-14 Tomcat was named after him.

I was the last speaker that day, after all the other flag officers had spoken so glowingly of Adm. Moorer. Now I was going up to the microphone with the job of presenting him with our award. I was a bundle of nerves and that is putting it mildly. As I looked out and saw the faces of my other shipmates, I froze my gaze on one, Ernie Gallo, a former CT who later worked for the CIA and who is - as of the moment of this writing - president of the LIBERTY Veterans Association and doing a great job.

I presented the award to Adm. Moorer. It was made of solid brass and heavier than hell. I don't remember the exact wording, but the gist of it was our appreciation for what he had done in getting the *USS LIBERTY* story told. I could see the genuine joy in this old salt's eyes as he was near tears.

His response to us was, "Out of all my service to the Navy, I treasure this award above all the others."

The award was so heavy that the Admiral could not lift it. To prevent it from being left behind or forgotten, it was immediately put in the trunk of his car. This event, even more than the dedication of the library in Grafton, was the highlight of my presidency in the LVA. I can't take all the credit for it, because many worked hard to bring it about. In fact, it wasn't even my idea, but rather that of Tito Howard, a filmmaker and friend of both Admiral Moorer and Willis Carto and another big supporter of getting the *LIBERTY* story out.

This was not the only "*USS LIBERTY* Award" we gave out. The second went to American Legion Post 560 located in Zimmerman, Minnesota, our *USS LIBERTY* Home Port. "Home Port" meant that this particular post adopted us and took us under their wing, since we had been abandoned by our own government. They had heard about the *USS LIBERTY* and contacted me, as I was president at that time. Having heard about what we went through, they decided they wanted to dedicate a park in the town of Zimmerman to our memory. The land for the park was donated by an elderly gentleman who knew what had happened to us as well. The expenses for building the park were covered by Post 560. In the end, it was a fantastic place for kids to play and families to

recreate. Just like in the case of the *USS LIBERTY* Memorial Public Library in Grafton, Wisconsin, as many of us who were able got on planes and went to the dedication ceremony.

As I approached the park, I could see a large object covered with a red, felt covering. It was a cold, blustery day, as you can imagine in Minnesota, the land of a thousand lakes. Nevertheless, despite the cold temps, the warmth there amongst the people more than made up for the chilly weather. At the beginning of the ceremony, the granite memorial was uncovered, revealing the names of the thirty-four men murdered that day by Israel.

It was a very emotional moment for all of us, to see the names of our friends, who, even if they were to be forgotten and ignored forever by their own government, would always be immortalized in at least one corner of America.

In addition to some of the guys in Post 560 who spoke, we also had with us as a special guest none other than former Congressman Paul Findley from the state of Illinois who had been run out of office by pro-Israel forces as a result of him being more pro-American than pro-Zionist.

It was a beautiful ceremony, complete with color guard, taps and every other thing befitting a military celebration. Of the many people involved in the dedication, the three who deserve particular recognition are Stan Wooley, Peggy Moon and Wayne Gilbertson who were the brains behind the whole project. Shortly thereafter, post 560 was given the *USS LIBERTY* Award, inscribed in granite and thanking them not only for the park but also for giving us the honor of being “adopted” by them.

As a testimony to their dedication to our cause, every year around the anniversary of our attack, Post 560 has a ceremony remembering what took place, where the names of those slaughtered by Israel are read aloud and taps is played.

In general, this was how it was. A reunion here, a dedication there. We did what we could to get the word out in whatever way we could imagine. We did radio shows and of course a newspaper

interview here and there. We just cruised down the highway, without putting the pedal to the metal.

There was no real reason to hurry things along until one September morning when the world as we knew it changed again just as dramatically as it did on June 8, 1967.

Chapter 23--The World Turned Upside Down

It was a normal morning in mid-September, or so I thought. It began as it usually did, with me being grateful to be alive one more day, despite Israel's best attempt to murder me many years ago. I got up, made myself a cup of hot tea and turned on the news.

Ever since reading that article years earlier in the *Rocky Mountain News* about the *USS LIBERTY*, I had come out of my coma and became something of a news junkie, and especially anything dealing with politics and the Middle East. Natural to form then, as soon as the TV started talking, I sat down to get my morning fix. As with most TV's, the noise started squawking before the pictures began dancing, and as soon as I could hear the noise, I knew something big was going on.

The obvious mood in the voice of whoever was speaking was one of near-hysteria. In trying to make out what was going on, I heard chatter about an airliner crashing into a building, and then before I knew it, there was a picture to go along with the audio. I immediately recognized the unmistakable sight of the Twin Towers in New York and thick, black, oily smoke billowing out of one of them just as it did from my ship some thirty-four years earlier.

It was Lisa's day off from work, and so she came in the room, looked at what was taking place on the tube, was immediately entranced and sat down to soak it all in. We sat together for a minute without saying so much as "good morning, honey" to each other. At last, she, being the smarter of the two of us, spoke first--

"How could an airplane crash into that tower accidentally?" she asked semi-accusingly. "It had to be on purpose."

My response to her, out of the side of my neck since I didn't want to take my eyes off the TV for even a second, was in the affirmative-

"ABSOLUTELY it was on purpose."

I was so glued to what was going on and so intent upon not missing even the clearing of someone's throat that I was almost on top of the TV. Then, as Lisa and I watched and listened, out of the corner of the TV, a moving object entered from out of nowhere - yet another airliner. Then, that crashed into the other tower.

After the first plane hit, I was convinced it was deliberate, but now after seeing the second one, I was a convert. In that moment I knew something was up. Two planes don't come crashing into the Twin Towers within minutes of each other "accidentally". Someone had planned this for sure.

As we processed the info that two planes had just crashed into the Twin Towers, breaking news came over the TV announcing that yet another plane had hit the Pentagon and then, as we were getting used to that, still more news comes that yet another plane has gone down somewhere in the Pennsylvania countryside.

An eerie (that is the best word I can find for it) feeling came over me as I took all this in. An uncomfortable sixth-sense-something settled in my stomach, identical to what I and the other guys had felt as we headed towards the Sinai Coast in '67 after leaving Rota, Spain.

As I watched the smoke pour out of the buildings, memories came flooding back into my mind of what happened the day our ship was attacked - particularly the odor caused by the burning fuel oil. With the flood of memories came the flood of nausea as my stomach began its usual maneuvers whenever I think back to the events of that day and especially that unforgettable smell.

My wife and I were already numbed by the whole thing and if asked to give a prediction of what was going to happen next, we couldn't have done so to save our lives.

As fate would have it however, the answer to that question was provided a mere few minutes later, for just as every fireworks display goes out with a big bang, as every concert has its grand finale and every banana split has its cherry on top, the worst of the morning's events was yet to come.

Now, with millions - possibly *billions* of people watching their TV's, one, and then the other of the towers crumbles like dry dirt in a child's hands and then the entire country - literally - turned into a mad house.

Although I did not know how or why, I knew right then and there it was all over for us as a nation and that nothing would ever be the same for us again, or at least not for a long, long, long time. Someone had gone to great lengths in pulling this off and whoever this "someone" was, they obviously had big plans for us all and none of them good. As a vet who has seen armed conflict up-close and who can smell war on the horizon the same way some people can smell an approaching rain storm, I knew what was headed our way.

I turned to my wife and said to her, "WWIII has just started, honey."

After the jury in my mind had given its verdict, for the most part I just kept my comments to myself. We spent the rest of the day glued to the TV, scanning channel after channel for anything new in the same way that a teenager constantly changes the radio station in looking for his favorite new song. One TV station claimed 50,000 were dead. Another claimed 30,000. No one seemed to know anything and yet talked as if they knew everything. The late Peter Jennings commented that the collapse of the buildings, coming down perfectly in their own space looked like a controlled demolition. My response to him, out loud and with more than a little agitation was, "No shit, Sherlock, because that's exactly what it was."

Deep in thought, the next day I headed over to the local mercantile to get a few supplies. The patrons were not as much chatty as they

were barks. Usually, they were more than content with making small-town small talk.

Now however, in the span of just twenty-four hours, each had become a self-proclaimed expert on geopolitics. In much the same way that millions of people had been frightened out of their wits with the radio broadcast of Orson Wells' *War of the Worlds* back in the 1930's, believing that an alien invasion had taken place, my local Coloradans had swallowed everything given to them hook, line and sinker. They were unanimous in their assertion that the only way to fix what had happened in New York the previous day was to nuke every single Muslim country in the world whether they were involved in it or not.

I dared not say a word about what I felt or thought, knowing what would ensue. My neighbors (irrational and incapable of listening to reason right now) were - understandably and justifiably - angry at what had just happened and would eat me alive if I told them my theory concerning the previous day's events. My experience in matters such as these - first hand experience to boot - would mean nothing to them. Rather, my attempt in bringing some rational and much-needed skepticism to the discussion would be seen as me siding with the people who had done this, (which most certainly I did not) and therefore the swastikas which had been painted on my garage years earlier following a newspaper interview I had done would be tame by comparison. As any man knows, there is a time for fight and a time for flight, and in this case the only safe strategy for me was to put aside my first amendment rights and instead run to the protection afforded by the fifth.

It was advice I passed along to my children who were in school at the time. Based upon some of the comments they made after getting home from school, the discussions taking place in the classrooms and schoolyards were no different from those their parents were having in which total war was the only solution to what had just happened. Despite the fact I knew my boys were tough and could certainly take care of any problems that came their way, I didn't want any trouble for them. So I told them to just stay quiet and in general go along to get along.

To my great shock and dismay, my fellow crewmates were no exception. I assumed that after what we had all been through there would be some shred of skepticism on their part, but sadly not a fiber of it was to be found. Almost to a man, war fever had broken out amongst them in the same way smallpox had to my American Indian ancestors many generations ago. No one seemed immune to it. In general, they believed everything being handed to them by the same media/government hydra that had covered up what happened to us decades earlier.

I tried reasoning with them, telling them not to be so hasty in their conclusions. After all, as I indicated earlier, were we supposed to trust the word of the same government that lied about what we had gone through?

As much as it pained me to see them taking the bait and to see my words fall on deaf ears, I couldn't totally blame my shipmates for being taken in. After all, the people responsible for bringing this about were meticulous in the planning of this terrible event and seemed to have covered all the bases. They had "surveillance photos" of the hijackers coming to and from the airports. A pile of circumstantial evidence a mile high painted a completely credible drama as far as the tragedy went and therefore only the insane would challenge such an overwhelmingly convincing story.

Nevertheless, I remained part of the "insane" crowd and refused to believe it happened the way "they" (meaning the same government that conspired to have me killed years ago) said it happened. I knew what I knew and unless God Himself came down from the skies to tell me something different, there was no way I would change my mind about it. Like smelling a gas leak in the house when no one else does, you know what it is and the fact no one else agrees with you does not change what you know.

One of the things convincing me that there was more to this than the explanation offered was the seeming absence of cooperation between the various U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies. The FBI wouldn't work with the CIA, the CIA wouldn't work with the NSA, the NSA wouldn't work with the State Department and on and on and on.

As far as this particular item went, it was like those puzzles you play with as a small child, where the pieces are so large you can't help but put them together easily. If indeed this "non-cooperation" described by the media was true, what it told me was that there were people on the inside of all these various agencies acting as gatekeepers and saboteurs in making sure the left hand didn't know what the right hand was doing, thus obstructing these various agencies from coordinating their efforts in preventing this tragedy.

More than anything else though, it was the speed of the "investigation" that convinced me something stunk about the whole thing. I had seen this shtick before with what happened to us, when an inquiry that should have lasted six months was done in six days and the conclusion at the end of it was completely contrary to the reality I personally knew.

Now, here is this thing, involving four airliners being hijacked simultaneously and fifteen minutes later they are blaming it on - surprise, surprise - Israel's enemies, just as they would have done had my ship sunk thirty-four years ago with no witnesses to tell a different story.

Although the airliners had stopped crashing I was convinced it wasn't over. There were things being said by people "in the know" telling me there was possibly a "Part II" to all of this.

And then - like thunder following lightning and after certain people are predicting with "100% certainty" that a biological attack will take place - anthrax-laced letters start showing up in the U.S. postal system with all sorts of "Islamic" language attached to them.

And once again, just like on 9/11, America is in a state of panic. People are buying duct tape, medicine, and all sorts of other things they think will protect them from the big, bad Arabs. Just like with 9/11, this was a high-tech attack (since making something such as a biological weapon requires enormous resources) and yet no one in America is asking important questions, such as whether the Arabs possess the ability to do such things.

Being that I was - politically and socially speaking - conservatively inclined, I (embarrassingly, I must admit) was glued to Fox News throughout the entire ordeal. And despite the fact that I never got a PhD in Political Science, nor did I receive training in spycraft from the CIA, I knew in my gut that the picture we in America were being handed was as much a staged production as anything coming out of Hollywood.

Day by day, the skepticism continued to drip in, drop by drop. Soon there were puddles, then pools, and then before I knew it, I was wading in it. There was nothing I could actually prove, just the general sense that there was something rotten in Denmark about the whole thing. It was the way you would feel in seeing eight guys closing in on you all at once - you know they are there to jump you, even if they don't say anything or have any weapons.

One day as I was watching Fox News, it came - the smoking gun I needed in justifying and solidifying my disbelief. I saw something that changed not only me, but how I view things in a profound way.

It was a four-part series Fox had done in dealing with the horde of spies from Israel arrested in the aftermath of 9/11. According to the reporter covering the story, there were not just a few, but rather several hundred arrested. Originally, the government had been alerted to their presence after these spies attempted to penetrate federal facilities by posing as "art students". It was not just a "here and there" phenomenon, but literally was taking place all over the country.

This was not the big story however.

The big story was a particular team of them arrested after they were witnessed in Liberty Park, New Jersey (where they had a bird's eye view of the Twin Towers on the day of the 9/11 attacks) cheering after the attacks. According to the way Fox News reported it--

"...Investigators suspect that the Israelis may have gathered intelligence about the attacks in advance, and not shared it. A highly-placed investigator said there are – quote – ‘tie-ins.’ But when asked for details, he flatly refused to describe them, saying, – quote --

– ‘evidence linking these Israelis to 9-11 is classified. I cannot tell you about evidence that has been gathered. It’s classified information.’”

So in other words, these Israeli spies, situated in Liberty Park, cheering as the towers came down and celebrating the fact that thousands of innocent Americans had just died, knew the attack was going to take place and yet refused to warn us about it.

But this was not the only story floating around out there dealing with the same topic. Other reports appearing on 20/20 with Barbara Walters discussed Israeli teams of intelligence operatives driving around New York City the day of the attacks in vans that later tested positive for explosives. They also had in their possession boxcutters (the same weapons said to have been used in hijacking the planes) and Arab clothing.

And then came the icing on the cake for me, which was the interview featuring former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin “Bibi” Netanyahu where, when asked about the attacks, said that they were “good”, and then, correcting himself, said they were “bad” but that they would generate “immediate sympathy for Israel.”

As it turned out, the very same spies arrested that day who were (quietly) sent back to Israel, would later appear on Israeli TV, admit they were Mossad and say that they had been sent to America to “document the event”.

And so, after these and other various items came clicking into place I knew that “*USS LIBERTY* Pt II” had just occurred. The murderous bastards who attacked us on June 8, 1967, but failed to sink us and achieve what they wanted in the Middle East had just pulled off the biggest slight of hand in America’s history. The pot of gold at the end of this rainbow was easy to figure out - America was going to war in the Middle East, big time, and in a way that would make Desert Storm look like a simple spring rain shower.

I watched as day by day, America came down with “war flu” and the accompanying fever. People were delirious, incoherent and irrational, just a few of this flu’s symptoms. Not since Pearl Harbor

had Americans wanted blood like they wanted it now, and rightfully so, the only problem being that they wanted it from the wrong people. The war drums continued beating louder and louder. Watching all this, I knew that had our ship gone down as planned decades earlier, the very same thing would have taken place then rather than now. "Remember the *LIBERTY*" would have been the warcry heard everywhere, just as today it was "9/11 - *We Will Never Forget*". My heart broke over and over again as I saw young men - both here in Colorado and in news stories - joining up in droves so they could go and kill those they believed were responsible for what had happened. In my mind's eye I could see George Bush in the White House, telling those around him who had brought this thing about, "You want war, you got war" in the same way as LBJ - our would-be assassin-in-chief decades earlier was portrayed in the movie, *JFK*.

I have no doubt about the fact that 9/11 was a direct result of what had been done to us June 8, 1967 - or rather, what had *not* been done. Had America dealt with Israel the way she dealt with Japan after December 7, 1941, (or any other country that attacked her for that matter) the events of 9/11/2001 would never have occurred. That the guilty got off scott-free with their evil deeds on June 8 - acts of war against America to boot - created a situation similar to a rapist who is never punished for his crime and as a result believes himself invincible. Israel - goaded by this same sense of shameless fearlessness - was all too willing to do it all over again. After all, what was there to fear? As Under-Secretary of State George Ball once said concerning the attack on our ship, "*If Israel can get away with killing Americans on the high seas, she can get away with anything.*"

Moreover, the fact that Israel *failed* in sinking us, and that a ship of fools had made monkeys out of the mighty Jewish state is something that no doubt left them seething for the previous thirty-four years. Every intelligence service in the world knew it was a deliberate attack. The fact that Israel failed to achieve her goal in sinking us was a terrible blow to the mystique she has tried to fashion around her, namely her invincibility and the notion that God is always on her side. The fact is that on June 8th, 1967, God decided that we, the crew of the *USS LIBERTY*, were the good

guys and thus refused the vampire Israel the victory she lusted after, and this fact has no doubt been like a thorn in her eye ever since.

And so, forced to suffer the same kind of humiliation that a bully goes through when he gets his ass walloped really good in a fair fight on the playground, she desperately needed something to undo her failures of June 8, 1967, and 9/11 was it. She even used airplanes to do it, exactly as she had when attacking our ship, and then had her spies stationed in *Liberty Park* to “document” the event, just to rub it in our noses.

Seeing all this made me realize how mortally important it was for the story concerning what had happened to us to get out. If Israel would do something like attack our ship and try to kill us all 34 years ago then she would certainly help pull off the hijacking of four planes and crash them into buildings. And if she would do something like this and yet still not achieve the desired end - meaning total war in the Middle East with America doing the fighting - then she would detonate a nuke in an American city.

I knew it was like going up against a 5-alarm fire with a squirt gun, but I was not about to go to my grave and then on to meet my Maker and have to account for the fact that in my country’s most desperate hour, I had sat back and done nothing.

Chapter 24--The Midnight Ride

As foolish as it sounds, (and particularly considering what had just taken place) I got back to my usual business of writing letters to Congress. I knew then (just as I know now) that it was for all intents and purposes a waste of time but I didn’t know what else to do. I told them over and over again that what happened to America on 9/11 and what happened to us on June 8, 1967 were as much twins as the towers that had been attacked on September 11th.

Naturally, the responses I got were of the same aforementioned middle-finger variety. Virtually everyone in Congress was so busy participating in the drive to whip the American people into war

frenzy that they would have ignored just about anything else sent to them, short of a big fat check.

The disinterest in what I was saying was not limited to Congress, but extended to my peers as well. Whether it was friends or family, no one wanted to hear anything about how this was all a big set-up. The response on the part of those around me was that my “theories” about 9/11 being a staged event meant to get us into war for Israel’s benefit were all the product of the fact I was on a ship attacked by “that country” years ago and therefore, I had an ax to grind.

This was made worse by the fact the Jewish propaganda machine went to work immediately after the attacks in convincing the American people that now somehow, Israel and the U.S. were - if not twin sisters, then at least kissing cousins in this great struggle against terrorism. The picture they painted was one of two peoples - America and Israel - and how they were “God’s chosen”, meaning special, exemplary, and exceptional and that 9/11 had happened because jealous, violent-minded, irrational, tyrannical barbarians hated us for our freedom and prosperity.

The results were too predictable. If Americans had supported Israel before, now they *really* supported her. As they had been led to believe, we both had a common enemy now, just as one of those spies told the arresting police officers after being seen in Liberty Park, New Jersey celebrating the terrorist attacks that day: *“We are not your problem...your problem is the same as our problem. The Palestinians are your problem.”*

And, predictably, flags were everywhere, as far as they eye could see. The American people were so war-hungry that they spray-painted everything they owned - houses, cars, mailboxes, anything - with the obligatory red, white and blue. Talk radio (as well as every other form of media) was like a broken record. War, war, war...Nuke 'em all and let God sort 'em out and anybody who disagrees is a traitor, etc, etc, etc.

And while all this was taking place, stories involving Israel and her spies arrested the day of the terrorist attacks dropped completely

off the play list. We heard no more about the celebrating Mossad agents or anything else indicating that our “ally” knew all about what was to take place and yet refused to warn us.

We can be rest assured, however, that had it been Arabs celebrating in Liberty Park rather than Israelis, the news would have gotten center-stage coverage continuously.

Unfortunately, the disinterest in what I was saying was not only from my friends and family, but from my shipmates as well. They didn’t want to hear any crazy-talk about how this was a setup job in the same vein as the attack and abandonment of our ship was thirty-four years ago. Some quietly disagreed with me while others snickered and some got just plain angry. Some of them accused me of being un-American for suggesting that our government - the very same creature that tried to murder us and then covered it up - would be in on something like this.

It was mind-boggling, to say the least, but in hindsight, I think I now understand why there had been this general refusal on the part of the survivors to view the 9/11 attacks as anything other than what the government said they were.

The shock and horror we experienced upon finding out our own government had betrayed us is something I cannot really put into words. As I said in the opening part of this book, it is like discovering that your own parents took out an insurance policy on your life, hired a hit man to kill you, and then when the thing didn’t go off as planned and your would-be murderer got caught and arrested, they come up with the bail money to spring him.

Living with this awareness is like having acid dripped on your bare skin, drop by drop. It slowly eats away at you and leaves you in agony, and all you can think about is getting into a shower and washing that acid off.

And so, when 9/11 came around, and they (our government) had “identified” the perpetrators of this act, the mighty machinery of Uncle Sam was rolling into action and going after the “guilty parties” as they should have done the day we were attacked, I think

a lot of the guys embraced it for the easy-to-understand reason that they *wanted to believe in their country again*. It was their way of convincing themselves that things were getting better, everything was going to be okay and that what happened to us years ago was something out of the ordinary. By going along with the program, it was their way of undoing what had been done to them years ago and of convincing themselves that whatever sickness had existed at the time of our attack which prevented our “parents” (meaning the government) from protecting their children had passed and now as a nation, we were in “good health”.

I finally abandoned any attempts at bringing my shipmates around to my way of thinking as it only added to what was an already-contentious situation. If we were going to do any good in getting our story out there, we needed as much cooperation in the group as possible.

Thankfully, I (we) did have something in those early days immediately following 9/11 to keep us busy. About five months before the 9/11 attacks, a documentary I was intimately involved with entitled, *Loss Of Liberty*, was finished and released to the public. The man responsible for putting this together was Tito Howard, a filmmaker and friend of Willis Carto of the same *Spotlight* Newspaper that had me out to speak at their conference a few years back.

Being that Americans were (and are) more and more inclined towards visual media over books, Tito’s idea was to put together interviews with the survivors and have them tell their stories on film. My job was to get as many of the guys possible motivated on this project. I made phone calls every day, telling them how important this was and the possibilities it offered.

As it turned out, it was an easy task on my part, as virtually all of them were understandably eager to tell their story, and who can blame them? Just as a little kid who has been holding it in for hours really needs to go to the bathroom, these guys had been holding in their story for over thirty years and desperately needed to find a way of relieving themselves and letting the world know what they saw that day.

I was on the phone with them daily, setting up days and times for Tito to fly out and meet with them and get them on film. This was like a dream come true for our cause, or at least this was how I saw it. Having the guys tell their story on film was much more powerful than some newspaper article coming out once every five years by so-and-so reporter who made sure to end the piece with the statement that everything we said can't be believed because an "official investigation" took place years ago disproving our claims and that our reason for saying what we did was that we were nothing more than angry liars and Jew-haters.

All the while this documentary was taking place, Jim Ennes was working feverishly yet again to sabotage the project. He was contacting the survivors one by one and telling them to stay away from me, Howard and the film. Again, he based it upon (as he put it) Tito Howard's association with Willis Carto. Tito's talent as a filmmaker meant nothing to him. Tito's contacts (including Adm. Moorer and other high-ranking medal of honor recipients in both the Navy and the Marine Corps) were worthless as far as Ennes was concerned.

In hindsight though, as we will discuss later, it was not Willis Carto at all that had Ennes' underwear in a knot, but rather yours truly. By this time, Ennes had secretly made contact with Carto personally and had passed along information on the *LIBERTY* issue to him. He asked that their correspondence not be mentioned and all the while, continued browbeating the rest of us into staying away from Carto and his organization for fear of the LVA being tainted with the "anti-Semite" slur.

The cast of characters appearing in the finished documentary ranged from Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Thomas Moorer, Marine Commandant Ray Davis, Ambassador James Aikins, as well as many of the crew, both officers and enlisted of the *LIBERTY*. To this day, there are tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of people out there who know about what happened to us as a result of this documentary.

This was not the first time we were involved with a film project. Years earlier, we were working with a movie producer named

Norm Whalen out in California who was hot about our story. Naturally, given who rules Hollywood, finding people willing to work with him on the project was like finding water in the desert. Still, somehow or another, he managed to pull it all together. He had raised the money and had secured the services of a big-name director whose name he would not divulge.

The screenplay was written and the only thing left was for them to get started on everything. Then, without any warning, Norm was found dead in his home of a gunshot wound to the head in what was later ruled a “suicide” by the police, and all the papers dealing with the movie were no where to be found.

I was close with his family, and shortly after the news of Norm’s death, I got a call from his wife. She was frantic, had her two kids with her and was on the run, fleeing from their home in California. She called to tell me Norm’s death was not a suicide but refused to say anything more. She was crying and by what she was saying, let me know that she was frightened for both her life and the lives of her two kids. Right before hanging up she said I would never hear from her again. I haven’t.

As a result of my association with Tito Howard, I came into contact again with an old shipmate of mine I had not seen in years, Doc Kieper. He was one of my heroes as a result of what he did in saving so many guys who otherwise would have gone home to God that day. Tito was good friends with Doc and arranged to bring him over to my place. The purpose of the get-together was for us to brainstorm about the upcoming film.

During the week I spent with Doc, I learned a lot more about this man than his simply being a brilliant surgeon. After his tour of duty was done aboard the *USS LIBERTY*, he had been in a military jet which had malfunctioned right after take off. He ejected from the plane and although he was able to save his life, it cost him the use of his arm, something a surgeon obviously needs as much as a rifleman needs his eyes. At the time he was a Captain in the Navy, (equivalent of Colonel in the Army) and well on his way to becoming Admiral. The loss of his arm cost him his Navy career, thus preventing him from his promotion.

The loss of his arm and his promotion to Admiral was a terrible blow to him, as it would be to anyone, and yet he did not cry about it. No doubt he fell back on the lessons he learned onboard the *LIBERTY* the day it was attacked. Things happen and you deal with them and you move on.

While Doc was there with me during those ten days, we talked about the attack and everything that happened afterwards. One of the things that shocked me speechless was him telling me about my good buddy who was the ship's nurse aboard the *LIBERTY*.

As I indicated earlier, he had gone with me to Rome during the week the "investigation" giving Israel her "get out of jail free card" was taking place. As I also mentioned, he was antsy and nervous all the time and admitted to me his personal fear that his being Jewish might cause the crew to throw him overboard when they found out it was Israel who attacked us. I figured this antsiness on his part when we were in Rome was just a continuation of that fear. As Doc was to inform me however, there was much more to it than that.

On the day of the attack, while Doc was trying to repair the wounded and give them some small measure of relief from the unimaginable pain they were going through, he noticed the ship's supplies of morphine were way lower than should have been. This corpsman and a few others were the only ones besides Doc with access to that morphine. And although Doc's training was in medicine and not in detective work, it didn't take him long to figure out that someone was stealing the stuff. Doc conducted his own private investigation and found out in the process that this corpsman had been helping himself to the stuff for his own "personal" use, which resulted in there not being enough to go around for the guys lying in agony. As a result, he was busted down a few ranks.

I was not as much shocked at hearing this as I was heartbroken. This guy was my good friend. We had had lots of fun - drinking beer, playing cards and in general laughing it up. The thought of him doing something this dishonorable devastated me, but then, after the way we were treated by Kidd and our government, I guess I should just chalk it up to business as usual.

I contacted my friend years later, just to see how he was doing. At the time he was a jeweler out in California. I thought he would be glad to hear from me, just as I had been glad to talk to Stan White after all those years of separation and silence.

As it turned out though, he was not in the least bit happy to hear from me, and made that fact clear in the single phone conversation we had. As soon as he picked up the phone and I said hello to him and asked if he remembered me I could hear the ice cubes in his veins clinking together. I might as well have been Hitler himself for all the warmth his voice contained for me.

“Whaddaya want?” he said in a very cold, business-like tone.

I told him all about the rest of the guys and the LVA and everything we were doing and asked if he would be interested in getting together or getting involved in some way, as we were now having reunions on a semi-regular basis. His response was as quick and cold as a rattlesnake striking its victim. “I travel a lot with my jewelry business and the people I do business with wouldn’t appreciate it. I don’t have time and I’m not interested in hearing from you guys or getting together or anything like that. Don’t call me again, ever.”

Then he hung up the phone on me and I have not heard from him since.

Despite the great success the documentary achieved, it was not without its glitches. Like young boys playing a game of football who can’t agree on whether or not the ball was out of bounds, the LVA board and Tito Howard ran into differences of opinion as to who owned the copyrights to the film. It was settled in court in Howard’s favor.

As much as it sounds like I am beating a dead horse here, I have to say that once again, this unfortunate event was the product of a lone individual within the LVA who concentrated his efforts on undermining anything I was trying to achieve. This individual thought he and his book should remain the nucleus around which all *USS LIBERTY* business orbited, and therefore anything entering

this solar system which did not conform to his vision of things had to be obliterated. With as well-done as this documentary was, I can only imagine what other productive things might have come from this had this unnecessary legal squabble not occurred.

In the meantime, I now had something in my hands - something powerful - that I could give to people in trying to get the word out concerning our attack. Just as I had done in promoting Jim Ennes' book, I would drive hundreds of miles to libraries, public-access TV stations and others places where I thought the video might get some play.

Chapter 25--New Faces

It is amazing how quickly the years go by. When you're a kid, it seems like forever until you become "big" (meaning thirteen), at which point it takes forever to become an "adult" (eighteen) when you can do what you want. Then, next thing you know you are married, with kids and a mortgage and then - boom - you are forty, and then fifty, and so on.

Perhaps it was my age or the fact that we had seen such (relatively speaking) little results in terms of getting justice for what had happened to us years earlier, but the fact is that we (I) just slowed down. The vim and vigor of my youth energizing me to tell the world about what happened June 8, 1967 was now bit by bit being replaced with gray hair and wrinkles around the eyes and I was just running out of ideas. I continued pushing the documentary *Loss of Liberty* and doing an occasional radio show here and there, but in general my involvement with *LIBERTY* business was beginning to slow down considerably.

It was 2006 and the LVA elections were coming up. Because of the bylaws we laid down when forming the group, I could not run again for the board. Gary Brummett, the aforementioned Third Class Petty Officer working as a boilerman the day our ship was attacked, was made president and I was glad, in large part due to the fact I pushed him into it.

Being that he did not particularly enjoy the contentious world of politics, my good friend Gary was not in the least bit enthusiastic about the idea of being on the board, much less being president. In the end however, my coaxing proved successful and he grudgingly went along. In my opinion, Gary was one of the better presidents the LVA ever had, but to this day he still cusses me in his trademark Louisiana drawl for having dragged him into it. Being immersed in all this brought back a lot of old demons he had since purged from his system.

As you will see in a few minutes though, like many things dealing with the same higher power that saved us the day our ship was attacked, Gary's being elected to the presidency resulted in a domino action of sorts that led to great things happening for the *LIBERTY* story.

As I said, I was off the board and therefore somewhat out of the loop, which was good, because I needed a break too. For me the *LIBERTY* issue was and is like an injury from years past that never healed and therefore throbs constantly. There is no office where you can turn off the lights, lock the door and go home and then be free of it till next morning when you come back. Dealing with the *LIBERTY* and all the disappointment associated with it - phones slammed down in your ear and doors slammed shut in your face - takes a toll when all you are trying to do is tell others about what happened to you.

Despite sitting on the bench as far as the LVA went, I was not completely out of the game. I had a friend here locally who was a great patriot and would bring me anything he came across dealing with the *LIBERTY* issue. One day I got a stack of stuff from him, which included some articles cut out of a newspaper called *American Free Press*. As it turned out, the paper, published out of Washington D.C., was Willis Carto's. Prior to this it had been called *The Spotlight*, but because Carto had made a lot of enemies over the years as a result of taking on taboo issues such as what had happened to our ship, the paper and its parent corporation, Liberty Lobby had been sued. Thanks to the assistance of a crooked judge and crooked legal system under the sway of the same people who covered up what was done to us years earlier, the organization he

spent decades building up lost. They were bankrupted and forced to start over again from scratch.

The new articles about the *LIBERTY* appearing in AFP (*American Free Press*) were written by someone I had never heard of before. Upon reading them, it was immediately obvious to me this writer was working with someone who had been on the ship and who was giving him pointers as to where he needed to go and who he needed to talk to.

Not long afterwards, in a conversation with Gary Brummett, I found out that he was the one working with the reporter at AFP. He'd been put in touch with this guy through Ron Kukal, (another survivor) who contacted the writer after hearing him on a radio interview a year before. Brummett was working with this guy because he wanted to make sure that everything about our story was told correctly. He had an arrangement with him that any pieces he wrote would be sent to Brummett for fact-checking before they were submitted to the paper. Once Gary had signed off on them, off to the presses they would go.

The reunion in D.C. was coming up - the big 40. In order to have all our business finished with beforehand, we held the elections for the LVA board ahead of time. Gary (having spent three years as president and having experienced first-hand the BS associated with the LVA) was ready for something new in his life and did not run for re-election. I, however, being a glutton for punishment, ran again for the board and - along with my big mouth - was re-elected and made Public Relations Officer.

The next thing we knew, the big "40" had indeed arrived and we were in D.C., the nation's capital. We made sure to invite all the major networks -- print, radio and TV -- to cover the event. It was 40 years to the day since thirty-four Americans had been murdered on the high seas in a two-hour sneak attack by a country in the Middle East. Certainly this was a news-worthy event, considering that close to half a million American fighting men were now in the middle of two wars in that very region, wouldn't the reader agree?

As it turned out however, the only media interested in our story was the aforementioned *American Free Press*. There were no cameras from CNN, ABC, NBC, FOX or even ESPN there to record this historical event. There was just this dark-complexioned guy in glasses, going around, shaking hands with the guys and engaging them in conversation.

My first thought upon seeing him was how amazingly short he was. The second thing I noticed was that he looked Jewish, especially with his round, nerdy glasses. This made me pay more careful attention to him than I normally would have, particularly in what he said and how he acted.

If it sounds like I am being paranoid, then call me paranoid, but I had learned from experience that this was how the people who tried to murder us all that day operated. With as dangerous as our story was to what they were trying to do - both in this country and throughout the world - they were always listening in on us and watching everything we did, slithering around and trying to glean what it was we were up to, something I had experienced first-hand some years back which we'll take a few minutes to discuss now.

In January 2004, a symposium was being held at the State Department to discuss the *LIBERTY* attack. Lest the reader assume that D.C. suddenly came down with a sudden attack of patriotism, the reason for doing this was not a fact-finding mission but rather to further bury the truth. Some important events had recently taken place which made it necessary for them to do so.

A few years prior, a federal bankruptcy judge in Florida named A.J. Cristol, (Jewish and a big-time supporter of Israel) wrote a book entitled, *The LIBERTY Incident*. His book distorted the entire account of what really took place that day and exculpated "home, sweet home" (Israel) from any blame. It was one giant lie from cover to cover. The only honest thing in it was his name, and even that we have to take with a grain of salt.

And as if this weren't bad enough, what's worse is that the book was endorsed in writing by none other than John McCain III, Senator, 2008 presidential candidate and son of the same Admiral

John McCain responsible for orchestrating the cover-up of our ship's attack. Obviously, with his endorsement of Cristol's thesis, (namely that the attack on our ship was all a case of "mistaken identity" and that we were in the wrong place at the wrong time,) it was a case of an apple not falling far from the tree. "Like father, like son" as they say. From what I understand, every member of Congress was provided a free copy of this book as "reference" if and when they were to receive correspondence from their constituents regarding Israel's deliberate, murderous attack on our ship.

Despite the fact there is considerable contention amongst the survivors of the *LIBERTY* about various things, the one thing we are all in unanimous agreement about is that Cristol's book was not just lies, but indeed damnable lies from cover to cover, plain and simple.

Immediately after this wad of used toilet paper was released for public consumption, Capt. Ward Boston, (the Navy's Chief Legal Council for the Board of Inquiry looking into the attack nearly forty years before) was so outraged over Cristol's attempt at re-writing history in Israel's favor that he came out of hiding and publicly admitted he had been personally ordered by President Lyndon Baines Johnson himself to conclude that the attack was a case of mistaken identity.

In October 2003 Boston issued a legal affidavit stating the following -

"I, Ward Boston, Jr. do declare that the following statement is true and complete:

For more than 30 years, I have remained silent on the topic of USS LIBERTY. I am a military man and when orders come in from the Secretary of Defense and President of the United States, I follow them.

However, recent attempts to rewrite history compel me to share the truth.

In June of 1967, while serving as a Captain in the Judge Advocate General Corps, Department of the Navy, I was assigned as senior legal counsel for the Navy's Court of Inquiry into the brutal attack on USS LIBERTY, which had occurred on June 8th.

The late Admiral Isaac C. Kidd, president of the Court, and I were given only one week to gather evidence for the Navy's official investigation into the attack, despite the fact that we both had estimated that a proper Court of Inquiry into an attack of this magnitude would take at least six months to conduct.

Admiral John S. McCain, Jr., then Commander-in-chief, Naval Forces Europe (CINCUSNAVEUR), at his headquarters in London, had charged Admiral Kidd (in a letter dated June 10, 1967) to "inquire into all the pertinent facts and circumstances leading to and connected with the armed attack; damage resulting therefrom; and deaths of and injuries to Naval personnel."

Despite the short amount of time we were given, we gathered a vast amount of evidence, including hours of heartbreaking testimony from the young survivors.

The evidence was clear. Both Admiral Kidd and I believed with certainty that this attack, which killed 34 American sailors and injured 172 others, was a deliberate effort to sink an American ship and murder its entire crew. Each evening, after hearing testimony all day, we often spoke our private thoughts concerning what we had seen and heard. I recall Admiral Kidd repeatedly referring to the Israeli forces responsible for the attack as "murderous bastards." It was our shared belief, based on the documentary evidence and testimony we received first hand, that the Israeli attack was planned and deliberate, and could not possibly have been an accident.

I am certain that the Israeli pilots that undertook the attack, as well as their superiors, who had ordered the attack, were well aware that the ship was American.

I saw the flag, which had visibly identified the ship as American, riddled with bullet holes, and heard testimony that made it clear that

the Israelis intended there be no survivors. Not only did the Israelis attack the ship with napalm, gunfire, and missiles, Israeli torpedo boats machine-gunned three lifeboats that had been launched in an attempt by the crew to save the most seriously wounded — a war crime.

Admiral Kidd and I both felt it necessary to travel to Israel to interview the Israelis who took part in the attack. Admiral Kidd telephoned Admiral McCain to discuss making arrangements. Admiral Kidd later told me that Admiral McCain was adamant that we were not to travel to Israel or contact the Israelis concerning this matter.

Regrettably, we did not receive into evidence and the Court did not consider any of the more than sixty witness declarations from men who had been hospitalized and were unable to testify in person.

I am outraged at the efforts of the apologists for Israel in this country to claim that this attack was a case of “mistaken identity.” In particular, the recent publication of Jay Cristol’s book, The LIBERTY Incident, twists the facts and misrepresents the views of those of us who investigated the attack.

It is Cristol’s insidious attempt to whitewash the facts that has pushed me to speak out.

I know from personal conversations I had with Admiral Kidd that President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara ordered him to conclude that the attack was a case of “mistaken identity” despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Admiral Kidd told me, after returning from Washington, D.C. that he had been ordered to sit down with two civilians from either the White House or the Defense Department, and rewrite portions of the court’s findings.

Admiral Kidd also told me that he had been ordered to “put the lid” on everything having to do with the attack on USS LIBERTY. We were never to speak of it and we were to caution everyone else involved that they could never speak of it again.

I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of that statement as I know that the Court of Inquiry transcript that has been released to the public is not the same one that I certified and sent off to Washington.

I know this because it was necessary, due to the exigencies of time, to hand correct and initial a substantial number of pages. I have examined the released version of the transcript and I did not see any pages that bore my hand corrections and initials. Also, the original did not have any deliberately blank pages, as the released version does. Finally, the testimony of Lt. Painter concerning the deliberate machine gunning of the life rafts by the Israeli torpedo boat crews, which I distinctly recall being given at the Court of Inquiry and included in the original transcript, is now missing and has been excised.

Following the conclusion of the Court of Inquiry, Admiral Kidd and I remained in contact. Though we never spoke of the attack in public, we did discuss it between ourselves, on occasion. Every time we discussed the attack, Admiral Kidd was adamant that it was a deliberate, planned attack on an American ship.

In 1990, I received a telephone call from Jay Cristol, who wanted to interview me concerning the functioning of the Court of Inquiry. I told him that I would not speak to him on that subject and prepared to hang up the telephone. Cristol then began asking me about my personal background and other, non-Court of Inquiry related matters. I endeavored to answer these questions and politely extricate myself from the conversation. Cristol continued to return to the subject of the Court of Inquiry, which I refused to discuss with him. Finally, I suggested that he contact Admiral Kidd and ask him about the Court of Inquiry.

Shortly after my conversation with Cristol, I received a telephone call from Admiral Kidd, inquiring about Cristol and what he was up to. The Admiral spoke of Cristol in disparaging terms and even opined that "Cristol must be an Israeli agent." I don't know if he meant that literally or it was his way of expressing his disgust for Cristol's highly partisan, pro-Israeli approach to questions involving USS LIBERTY.

At no time did I ever hear Admiral Kidd speak of Cristol other than in highly disparaging terms. I find Cristol's claims of a "close friendship" with Admiral Kidd to be utterly incredible. I also find it impossible to believe the statements he attributes to Admiral Kidd, concerning the attack on USS LIBERTY.

Several years later, I received a letter from Cristol that contained what he purported to be his notes of our prior conversation. These "notes" were grossly incorrect and bore no resemblance in reality to that discussion. I find it hard to believe that these "notes" were the product of a mistake, rather than an attempt to deceive. I informed Cristol that I disagreed with his recollection of our conversation and that he was wrong. Cristol made several attempts to arrange for the two of us to meet in person and talk but I always found ways to avoid doing this. I did not wish to meet with Cristol as we had nothing in common and I did not trust him.

Contrary to the misinformation presented by Cristol and others, it is important for the American people to know that it is clear that Israel is responsible for deliberately attacking an American ship and murdering American sailors, whose bereaved shipmates have lived with this egregious conclusion for many years.

*Ward Boston, Jr., Captain, JAGC, USN (Ret.)
Senior Counsel to the USS LIBERTY Court of Inquiry"*

Boston's affidavit was a bombshell, and that is putting it mildly. Here we had someone who was on the inside of the cover-up and who had witnessed everything on a first-hand basis admitting what we *LIBERTY* survivors had been asserting all this time.

Therefore, in the interests of throwing a bucket of water on what could easily have become an out-of-control fire as far as the *LIBERTY* cover-up went, busy little bees went into action. It was decided that a "symposium" would take place at the U.S. State Department to "discuss" the event. As the reader will see, in effect it was just another kangaroo court of sorts, not unlike a guy being

on trial for raping a girl where the judge, prosecuting attorney and jury are all members of his immediate family.

Fortunately for us, we had at least one friend up there, James Bamford, former Naval Intelligence Analyst and best-selling author on matters dealing with the NSA who has always been a supporter and friend of the *LIBERTY* issue.

I stood outside the State Department building with my friend Matthew Balic, long-time *USS LIBERTY* supporter who arranged for me to be there. He also arranged for two full-page announcements of my personal letter to (then) President Bush to appear in the *Washington Post*. The letter was a personal account of what I saw that day as our ship was attacked as well as the subsequent cover-up and a plea for him to do his duty as President of the United States in fixing what was unquestionably an act of war against America. Standing with us in the cold January weather was Pat Blue, widow of Alan Blue, the NSA linguist blown to bits in the torpedo blast that hit the CT spaces, as well as former CT Joe Lentini, who only barely survived.

We thought that perhaps this was “it” and that after we told our story, heads would start rolling. The symposium was the closest thing we had ever had to telling our story to an official body in Washington D.C.

Before entering the room we had to provide names and IDs. Our names were written down and given to the “proper authorities”, meaning the individuals overseeing the event.

We sat down and waited for our day in court. I was in the second row from the front. Once the show began, Mark Susser, head moderator of the symposium and the State Department’s “official” historian, stood and gave an almost 45-minute speech which was clearly meant to poison the water. It was obvious that he was totally on the side of Israel and her God-damned “mistaken identity” bullshit story. He constantly referred in glowing terms and slavish demeanor to that weasel Cristol, who sat up there on his fat rear end smiling like a mob lawyer who knew his client was about to get an acquittal because the judge and jury had been bribed.

Before Susser's speech, the *LIBERTY* survivors present were introduced to the audience, so they certainly knew who we were ahead of time.

As the symposium began, it was obvious from the beginning that it was going to be yet another white-wash. Besides Cristol - an obvious shill for Israel - there was Michael Oren, who as of this moment is not only Israel's ambassador to the United States, but as well a good personal friend to current Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the same man who characterized the 9/11 attacks as "good" because they would generate "immediate sympathy" for Israel.

In the final tally, James Bamford was the only one out of the seven up there who wasn't part of Susser's crooked jury. They bantered about for around an hour, debating small items about the attack that day but never mentioning the cover-up that followed. Cristol's book was used over and over again as the "definitive source" in refuting any evidence revealing Israel to be the murderer she is.

Not just the panel, but the audience as well was packed with Israel's supporters. You could see it in their demeanor, as their arrogance and hostility towards us was obvious. They smiled, chuckled, snickered and in general showed their approval for anything Cristol or anyone else said in perpetuating the "big lie". In general, the entire thing was just as much a defamation of - not only the dead but the survivors as well - as the original investigation had been decades earlier.

The one good thing coming out of it was that James Bamford read aloud Ward Boston's affidavit. Interestingly, for reasons I have not been able to discover, James Ennes was furious that Bamford had gotten a copy of the affidavit from an associate of his out in California who had faxed him a copy of it that very morning.

After the panel finished with what was, for all intents and purposes, one big jabber-jawing session in favor of Israel, Susser gave yet another painfully-long speech about how the matter is settled and we should all just go back to thinking Israel is America's bestest-buddy in the universe. He then opened up Q&A from the audience.

Lentini, physically-closer to the microphone than I was, got there before I did and spoke for a few minutes without addressing any of the lies in Cristol's book. As soon as he finished, I prepared for my turn, since I was standing at the other microphone. As soon as they saw that it was yours truly, Susser hastily announced that the symposium was over - immediately. My microphone was cut off so that no one could hear anything I said. Several people in the audience, including my friend Matthew Balic shouted out loud, "Let him speak!" several times but to no avail.

The reason they cut my microphone off so quick was no mystery - the symposium was being covered by C-SPAN, which meant it would be broadcast across the nation.

I was so angry I was shaking and ready to explode. The *USS LIBERTY* had just been torpedoed again, only this time instead of Israel doing it off the coast of Sinai they did it within the walls of our very own State Department.

Not that I should have been particularly surprised at this. After all, just a short distance away you could go to Arlington National Cemetery and view the headstones of those killed in the attack on our ship, and not one of them mentions it was Israel who did the killing. Furthermore, out of the 200-plus decorated vets from the *LIBERTY* awarded Purple Hearts, Bronze Stars, Silver Stars and everything else you can imagine, not one word discussing the circumstances surrounding how it all came about. There isn't a single case in the history of our country, going all the way back to the American Revolution of someone being killed in action with no mention being made of how it happened, except ours.

Matt and I left the building and got on the tram for the hotel, not saying a word the whole time, we were so upset. Later that day, I got on a plane, wearing the same uniform I wear everywhere I go - my Purple Heart *USS LIBERTY* jacket and my blue *USS LIBERTY* hat. I had a two-hour wait at the airport, so in utter disbelief and yet believing it all, I sat at the bar and had a beer, hoping the medicine in the bottle would help calm me down and dampen my fury. I boarded the plane, got to my seat, leaned back

as far as I could and prepared myself for what would be one of the longest flights I have ever taken.

Despite everything I had been through up to that point, if someone had told me ahead of time I would see what I just saw, I would never have believed them.

As soon as I got home, I wrote a letter to then-Secretary of State Colin Powell demanding that he fire Susser for the disrespect he personally showed my thirty-four dead shipmates and the rest of the crew. I further categorized what had just taken place within the walls of the State Department as being every bit as diabolical as the attack on June 8, 1967 itself. I sent the letter certified, and not just one copy but several. I never received a reply.

The day before the State Department symposium, I was sitting at the bar in the lobby of the hotel where I was staying and having a beer. All of the sudden, out of nowhere, this gal comes up to me. She was young and gorgeous; similar in appearance to the actress Valerie Bertinelli. I was the only person at the bar, which meant there were open seats everywhere, and yet she comes over and plops her gorgeous self right next to yours truly. She ordered a mixed drink and then started up a conversation with me; asking me my name, was I staying in the hotel, what did I do, etc?

I, not suspecting anything and always willing to tell anyone with two ears the story about the *LIBERTY*, obliged her. She immediately acted very interested in what I was saying. We talked for a while and then, to my great shock, she put her hand over my left hand, covering my wedding ring. She said she had a room in the hotel with a bar and plenty of whatever we wanted to drink, so how 'bout we head upstairs where the drinks are free and the environment more private?

At that moment, the hair on the back of my neck began to tingle and my stomach started doing somersaults, similar to the feeling I got the day I looked into the eyes of that Israeli commando in the helicopter as it hovered above the deck of the ship. In an instant I knew she wasn't interested in me because I was the spitting-image of Tom Cruise, but rather for "professional" reasons, and I don't

mean money. I was as sure of the fact that this was a set-up as I was sure that this was D.C. Exactly what was planned for me I couldn't say; whether it was for her to get me into bed so I could be blackmailed later or whether it was to kill me. I pulled my hand away from hers, told her I was married and there was no way I would be unfaithful to my wife.

"Why not?" she asked coaxingly. "No one will ever know...your secret's safe with me..."

"I would know," I said and gave her a look showing I was serious and was not going to budge.

Maybe it was something in my demeanor, I can't say, but she knew somehow that I was on to her little game. Without a word, and after just having gotten a fresh drink she hadn't so much as touched, she got up and walked out the door of the hotel.

The events the next day at the State Department proved my theory was correct. "They" knew I was there in D.C. They knew that I was a loudmouth and they wanted to make sure I stayed quiet about what we had gone through on June 8th, 1967. In order to avoid the very embarrassing situation of cutting off my microphone, they had sent this gal in so that I could be videotaped in bed with her, at which point afterwards, they could come to me with the pics and say, *"Sure would be rough on your wife if she knew about this. Maybe you ought to just avoid the thing at the State Department later and instead take in some of the sights around town."*

In effect, they tried to do to me what they had done nearly forty years earlier when they sent me to Rome as the "investigation" into the attack on our ship was taking place.

And so, now here at the 40th reunion in 2007, how could I not be circumspect about the little AFP man in the glasses? The fact he worked for Carto was definitely in his favor, but at the same time, I knew his organization was every bit as much a target of "our friends" as the LVA was. He could have very well been a spy sent in to bring down the house of cards from within just as our friends

were famous for doing, going all the way back to Judas' betrayal of Jesus.

Later on Friday evening of the reunion weekend, Brummett came up and asked me if I wanted to do a radio show later that evening with him and Aimetti. I told him "sure" and he gave me the "what time" and "where at" of it all.

I took the elevator upstairs to the room and walked down the hall to find the door to the room already open. I went in and saw Brummett and Aimetti standing there talking to each other as well as another guy with his back to me, talking on the phone. As I got closer, I saw it was none other than the little guy in the glasses from AFP. Again, I could not help but notice how amazingly short he was.

Just as soon as I walked in, the little guy shuts his cell phone and announces we'll be going on the air in about five minutes. He came up, shook my hand and introduced himself, since we had not spoken yet earlier in the day. I asked him if he worked for Carto, and he said he did. I then asked him what program were we doing. He said it was the show that his good friend Mike Piper (also a reporter at AFP) hosted five nights a week.

It was not as much a good interview as it was a great one. Brummett, Aimetti and I took turns, handing the phone back and forth and telling our story. The host of the show was probably the most gracious and supportive out of any I had ever dealt with. There were no trick questions, no veiled accusations that we were "Nazis" or "Jew-haters" like we had experienced on other shows. This guy obviously knew his stuff as far as the *LIBERTY* story went, and more importantly, was willing to call it what it was - an act of war against the United States every bit as serious as what took place December 7, 1941, which had brought the U.S. into WWII.

Being in D.C. and reliving everything that happened to us forty years ago - first at Arlington National Cemetery and then at the Navy Memorial where the names of the dead are read out loud to

us - is always tough, but after finishing the interview I felt better than I had all night.

I headed out of DC and back to Colorado. It was good seeing my friends again, but at the same time I could not help but feel the emptiness that yet another year and another reunion had passed. The blood of my murdered shipmates was still crying out for justice, and yet we were no closer to getting it for them then we were at 4 pm on June 8, 1967.

Chapter 26--New Places

Back home now, I settled into my normal routine. A month went by, and then another and then the next thing I know I am getting a call from Brummett, asking me how I felt about getting on a plane and going to California. He told me there was a conference scheduled for October and they wanted a *LIBERTY* survivor there to tell the story. In one of his trademark Louisiana expressions which I can't remember at this time he said there was no way in hell he was going to do it, and wanted to know if I would. I told him he should know better than to ask, since I will go anywhere, anytime to talk about the *LIBERTY*.

He said the name of the conference was *No More Wars For Israel* and was being put together by the same short guy in glasses who had been at the reunion in D.C. I wanted to know more and get to know this guy a little better before committing myself to it, so I told Gary to have him call me.

It wasn't but fifteen minutes later that the phone rang again and it was Mark Glenn, Mr. Eyeglasses himself. After some small-talk I got down to business and asked him the usual questions concerning the conference - when, where, who, what, etc, etc, etc.

At the onset he was very upfront with me - "Look, Mr. Tourney, I carry a lot of baggage because of the things I write concerning 'our friends', so if you would rather not get involved, I completely understand and there'll be no hard feelings."

In the conversation that followed, he said all the right things as far as I was concerned. He was not a “middle of the road” guy like so many others I had come to know. He didn’t tip-toe around certain issues for fear of being called whatever. Rather, he made clear to me his belief that our country was in a very dangerous situation and that the *LIBERTY* story was the key to not only understanding it all, but solving it all. He went further by saying the same people who attacked us on June 8, 1967 were responsible for 9/11 and - what’s worse - they were planning something even bigger and if the American people were not made aware of this danger we were finished as a nation.

The more we talked, the more we clicked and the more I liked him. He was not afraid to say what needed to be said and was not going to pussy-foot around anything. He did not carry the typical timidity associated with small men and was more than ready, willing and able to call a spade a spade despite the consequences.

What was even more amazing to me was what he risked by doing it. He had a wife and eight kids who obviously were the light of his life. He had moved out to Idaho years ago when he saw things going to hell in a handbasket back east where he was originally from. He built his own place from the ground up by himself out in the countryside, raised animals, chopped his own firewood and along with his wife, they home-schooled their kids.

I soon found out he was not Jewish, but rather Lebanese, which explained not only his obvious dark complexion but also the insight he had into how the people who tried to sink us that day operated.

I was naturally thrilled about speaking at the conference and let the other guys know about it. Naturally, given the fact it involved me, Ennes and his little gang went to work in trying to sink the whole deal before it had even begun.

As much as it sounds like me being paranoid, I’m sure Ennes trying to destroy the whole thing had more to do with yours truly than anything else. If AFP or any of these other “anti-Semitic” organizations (as he characterized them) came along with a big, fat bag of cash to buy a ton of his books, would he refuse doing

business with them on the grounds he did not like their political convictions and associations?

No way. He had already proven he was a chameleon of sorts with the way he horned in on the library thing with the Grob brothers years earlier. When he was under the impression they didn't have "two quarters to rub together", he wanted nothing to do with them, saying they were "anti-Semites" and all the rest. As soon as he found out they were loaded with cash however, he immediately changed appearance like one of those aliens you see in a science fiction movie, lowered his "standards", adjusted his "concerns" about their "anti-Semitism" and then suddenly, "getting the word out" about our attack became the most important issue.

And likewise, I am sure with the upcoming conference. Had the organizers of this thing sent him a big fat check for a few crates of his books, he wouldn't have blinked an eye in associating himself with the event.

Sadly, now that I had gotten involved with the little man in the nerdy glasses up in Idaho, Ennes' working against me and what I was trying to do had entered a newer and uglier phase than anything that had existed before. Now that we had the internet and were all linked up via email, it was a daily thing now, like a dog's barking at night that never stops. Always staying in the background of it all, nevertheless he would get the thing going and then throw his guys into the middle of it to do his fighting for him. They were emailing me on a daily basis, accusing me of trying to "destroy the LVA" and all that we had worked for, all the while forgetting that I was president three times, had raised more money for our group and had gotten more done than any other president. The library in Grafton was because of my efforts. The American Legion memorial was my deal and dittos with the recently-made documentary by Tito Howard, and yet, I was trying to "destroy" everything I had worked so hard for? Yeah, it made perfect sense to me.

Keep in mind, it was not the whole LVA, but just a few troublemakers in Ennes' back pocket who looked upon him as some sort of tin god. The rest of the guys stayed out of it which (although I certainly would have appreciated some support from

them) was actually a good thing in hindsight. If they had become involved, it would have just made an already-ugly situation worse.

I spoke with Mark about all of it and he was sympathetic. Not just that, but puzzled and more than a little angry, not only at the way I was being treated, but also because of the fact that (as he stated it) he knew that the real reason behind all of this was one man who had an ax to grind with me personally and that all the other stuff about not associating with “anti-Semites” was just an excuse on his part in hiding his own sense of jealousy and envy, something I did not comprehend at all.

Furthermore, Mark told me something I had not known, which was that Ennes had had personal correspondence years earlier with the same Spotlight/AFP/Willis Carto cabal that supposedly now were “untouchable” as far as the *LIBERTY* issue went because of their “radical” political views. Mark had learned this from his friend Mike Piper who had been with Carto and his organization from the beginning. Piper had kept the correspondence that Ennes had sent years ago and could dig it up if we wanted it. Because I needed to concentrate on the upcoming conference, I put the issue aside and did not pursue it.

Despite weeks of dealing with the barking and whining from the usual suspects in the LVA, the day arrived when I found myself boarding a plane headed to California, wearing (as I always did, everywhere I went) my Purple Heart *USS LIBERTY* jacket and *USS LIBERTY* blue hat. My first stopover was in Phoenix. As I boarded my next flight and headed down the aisle to my seat, putting my bag in the overhead compartment and turning to sit down, I heard a voice behind me just a few rows back, clear but not overly-loud--

“*USS LIBERTY*.”

Although the voice was familiar, I could not connect it with a face. I turned to locate the source, and, what do you know, there he was, the short guy in glasses I had gotten to know so well over the phone during the last month. I smiled big and reached over three

rows of people to shake his hand and then sat down and got ready for the trip.

We landed at John Wayne Airport near LA and the two of us met up in the terminal. We got our bags and headed out to the street to find a cab for the hotel. Mark was a piñata of emotions - excitement, agitation, and anxiety. I did not yet understand the reason why, but would very shortly.

We got to the hotel and walked into the lobby. As soon as we did he was set upon by people talking a million miles a minute, and not one word of it welcoming. Their rooms had not been taken care of, and worse than that, the hotel where the conference was scheduled to take place had cancelled the event.

It was a madhouse, and that's putting it mildly. There were forty or fifty people minimum - some of them speakers and some attendees - thronging around him with luggage in hand, tugging on him, tapping him on the shoulder, asking about their rooms and whatnot. He would have barely answered one question when he would be hit with ten others. His head was this way, then that way, then this, then that, and it just kept going like that on and on until I thought he would simply evaporate into thin air.

In addition to the event having been cancelled at the hotel, one of the other big problems was that all these people hounding him at that moment were merely the early birds. Right then he was dealing with about fifty people, but all totaled there were over 200 scheduled to come and from literally all over the country. The whole thing was like a volcano getting ready to erupt. As I was sitting there, more people entered the lobby and the process started all over again. As much as I pitied him and would have helped out in any way I could, I would not have traded places with him for anything.

He headed over to the counter and spoke with whomever was behind it for a few minutes. I couldn't make out what was being said, but it was obvious to me that it was a serious discussion.

He called everyone together with veiled but obvious concern and aggravation on his face. Like a parent who knows what's really going on but doesn't want to scare the kids, he told us there was a "problem" that he needed to fix, but that the first thing was to get everyone into rooms for the night. The hitch, though, was that we were all going to have to bunk up two to a room - at least for the first night. One by one (or rather two by two, like the animals in Noah's Ark) we went up to the counter with him as he got us our rooms and paid for them with his credit card.

I didn't mind bunking. In the Navy, you sleep in a room with fifty other guys. At least we had our own bathroom and TV.

Others though, mainly the gals, were not happy at all. They complained, but to no avail. Mark was as patient as he could be with them, trying to explain that we were in meltdown mode here and that everybody needed to man-up and do their part in not making things worse than they already were. Most of them grudgingly went along. A few continued to complain, but again, to no avail.

He gave me my key-card and told me to sit tight; that he would get back to me and let me know what the plan was. I felt really bad for him because the weight of the world literally was on his shoulders right now, and whether it was his fault or not, if this conference fell apart, the blame would fall on him.

I was not surprised in the least. I had seen this happen before a million times when it came to dealing with the forbidden subject of Israel. As soon as the announcement had been made a few months earlier that this conference was to take place in Orange County, California, things started going south. The ADL characterized the upcoming conference as an "anti-Semitic gathering". The hotel was getting calls weeks in advance by people claiming to be with the Orange County Sheriff's department, wanting to know if there was a conference scheduled to take place there called "No More Wars For Israel". Pro-Israel websites were rallying the troops and preparing for an invasion, commanding their readers to locate the site of the hotel and put the heat on the manager with the threat that

they would be shut down with protests if the conference was not cancelled.

Mark had anticipated this would happen, and had taken precautions. He had ordered the people down there organizing everything to use another name for the gathering and to not have his name associated with anything. However, a phone call to the hotel two days before the event by one of the scheduled speakers accompanied by an accidental slip of the tongue and the mentioning of Mark's name gave them all they needed in putting two and two together. At that point, everything began to unravel. As the old saying goes, "Loose lips sink ships."

With my keycard in hand, I meandered over to the bar in the lobby to get a beer. As I sat there with my back to the commotion behind me, I noticed a guy intently eyeing me from across the bar as if he knew me. A few minutes later, a few guys who had come out from Indiana for the conference, having seen the back of my jacket reading "*USS LIBERTY*" came and sat down next to me. They ordered their own beers, introduced themselves and started up a conversation.

As we sat there talking politics, both about what happened to us on June 8, 1967 and where the hell it was all going today, this guy across the bar continued eyeing me with a slight smirk on his face. I knew in an instant he was a spy of some sort from one of the pro-Israel groups. Obviously, some people were nervous about this conference, because I was not the only one being watched. Later that same evening Mark told me that when he got to the airport in Spokane, Washington, he noticed immediately he was being followed and watched by a man/woman team. They had boarded the plane with him, were seated directly across from his aisle and had paid careful attention to what he did throughout the flight.

The volcano continued to build. People - speakers and guests - continued pouring in, all of them wanting to know what was going on.

We got a suite upstairs - a big one - that we used as headquarters in trying to deal with the crisis. The conference was the next day and

as of this moment there was no place to have it. Mark's phone was ringing every thirty seconds and people kept tugging at him. We managed the first hurdle for the weekend, which was getting everyone into a room. The next mountain, of course, was finding a location that would host our gathering.

The next morning, Mark was out on the streets at 4:00 am, going from hotel to hotel to see if there were any conference rooms available. By this time, we would have taken anything, as long as it would hold the 200-plus people scheduled to gather later that day.

By this time, however, the word was out on the street about who we were and what our plans were. Therefore, every place he contacted which originally said they had an opening for the weekend, suddenly announced they were all booked up once he gave his name.

He came back around 9:00 am looking like he had not slept a wink all night, which was probably accurate. People were still all over him, wanting to know what was going on and what we were going to do. The hotel, for their part, refused to give any information to people calling and wanting to know about the conference other than to say it had been cancelled. No contact info, nothing. Mark tried once more to speak with the management; laying a stack of hundred-dollar bills half an inch thick on the table asking if they would just let us use one of their conference rooms for one night, offering that we would do all the work of putting out the chairs and the clean-up afterwards. We didn't need any food, nothing fancy - just a room.

The manager, obviously having gotten her marching orders from you-know-who, simply shook her head mercilessly from side to side in a constant arc the entire time he pleaded with her.

Then, like some miracle out of the Bible, an angel named Pete Pappas arrived. He was a friend of Mark's who came out from D.C. for the conference. Being something of a sweet-talker and deal-maker, he had found a Greek Orthodox church nearby willing to let us use their place for the night. He drove over to check it out.

As soon as he returned with the good news, we got to work organizing shuttles from the hotel to the church.

In the meantime, another one of Mark's friends, Hesham Tillawi, a Palestinian-American with his own weekly television show called *Current Issues*, organized a protest outside the hotel. He and Mark gathered all the hosts and attendees and had them meet outside the hotel. Then they contacted every radio host in the alternative media they knew with shows that day to cover the event and give out the phone number for the hotel in the hopes of bringing some heat down on them for what they did to us. Folks got to work in making up big signs and placards reading "*No More Wars For Israel*" and "*Remember the USS LIBERTY*" and anything else relevant to the conference's theme.

We stood on the corner where the hotel parking lot met the street. Mark was doing a radio interview by phone with one guy, while Hesham was doing another, passing the phone around to different guests and attendees so they could give their two cents. People driving by who saw our placards honked and waved. In general, our mood improved dramatically.

After that, we started boarding cars, vans, busses or anything we could and started heading over to the church. When we arrived there, we were shocked. It was big and it was beautiful. Yes, suffering the humiliation of being kicked out of the hotel and being forced to truck all the way across town to another location was no fun, but as soon as we saw how nice this place was, we knew we had won in the end.

Mark put his people to work fast, setting up chairs, tables, the audio/visual equipment, etc, and before we knew it, we were ready to rumble. He had a priest friend of his say an invocation, and once it was concluded with a hundred near-simultaneous "amens" we got down to business.

The problem, though, was that we only had the place for one night, which was not enough time for all the speakers who had come at great distance and inconvenience to speak. Mark got to work in prioritizing the ones that had to go on vs. the ones who could wait.

He was as fair as he could be, and again, I did not envy him for what he had to do. Now he had to go and tell at least half of those originally scheduled to speak that they had to be bumped and those who would be speaking needed to shorten the length of their talks.

As soon as it got rolling, however, everything seemed to click into place. I was one of the fourth or fifth speakers, I can't remember for sure. What I do remember, though, is the glowing introduction I received that resulted in a standing ovation as I approached the podium. This heart-warming reception was then repeated after I finished telling my story. I couldn't remember ever having been treated so well.

All the speakers were excellent. Not a dull moment, as the saying goes, and the next thing we knew the church doors fly open and four guys wearing Dominos pizza uniforms storm the place with stacks of pizzas. Mark had ordered around fifty large pizzas of every possible combination of toppings so that everyone would have something. We took a break, ate our pizza, drank our sprite and coke, and conversed. In general, we all felt good.

The conference ended at around 11:00 pm. We headed back to the hotel and up to the suite where we packed about sixty people in, more than the fire code would allow. Drinks were poured and we celebrated the fact that somehow, by the grace of God, we had been able to pull it off - or at least half-way.

All in all, we estimated there were at least 100 people who would have paid the \$100 conference fee who did not show up. That conference fee was what was needed to pay for all the rooms, flights, food, the church, shuttles and everything else. Mark had cleaned out his credit cards paying for what he could. Some of the people even had to pay for rooms they had already paid for a month earlier.

After that weekend, making a lot of new friends and contacts, I headed back to Colorado. Like all things these days involved in telling the truth and trying to do the right thing, it was hectic but worth it.

Chapter 27--Family Feud

After getting to know him better, I figured out why at the tender age of only forty, Mark had eight kids. He was like a perpetual motion machine that never quit or even slowed down and nothing seemed to tire him out when it came to fighting the good fight...

...except for those four weeks immediately following the conference out in California...

The stress of that weekend must have packed a wallop on my miniature friend because within days of his returning to Idaho, he came down with a bad case of shingles. He was confined to bed, something totally out of character for him, but he literally had no other choice. His batteries were dead and his body beaten to a pulp. Just getting up for a few minutes would wipe him out to the point where he would crash and sleep for two hours afterwards.

News of what happened to us in California spread all over the place. Pro-Israel bloggers were celebrating the fact they had shut down yet another venue they did not like, while our side used it as prima face evidence that there is no free speech in America when it comes to certain issues.

One day, shortly after returning home, I got an unexpected phone call from someone wanting to do a story about the *LIBERTY* and what had happened with the conference being nearly shut down in California. His name was Paul Craig Roberts, former Treasury official during the Reagan administration, one-time editor of the Wall Street Journal and now an independent journalist. He had been hired by Larry Flynt's infamous *Hustler Magazine* to do the piece.

He had already spoken with some of the other guys and they had all agreed to do the interview, as did I. When I spoke to Mark about it and asked whether he wanted to be part of it his answer was short and sweet - "No way." He said he wouldn't be involved with anything peddling the degradation and exploitation of women.

I understood how he felt, respected his decision and passed the info along to the powers-that-be. I wasn't comfortable with the idea of

being associated with something like this either, but one thing I had learned in forty years of trying to tell our story is that beggars can't be choosers and we had to take every opportunity that came our way.

Mark slowly recovered and would work in bed on his computer. He put me to work writing articles which he would post on the website we created (<http://ussliberty.wordpress.com>) and then send them out to other websites to be posted. He had lots of friends with their own radio shows, including the aforementioned Mike Piper (whose show I had been on at the reunion) Mark Dankof, Rick Adams, Mike Rivero, Hesham Tillawi and a handful of others I can't remember right now. Like some talent agent, Mark would thrust me out there on the stage to tell my story. It seemed every other day he had me lined up for something.

In short, my vacation time as far as the *LIBERTY* issue went was over and now I was back to work like I had never been before.

I didn't mind a bit. I had yearned for this kind of thing for years, where instead of doing something only a few times a year, I was doing something a few times a week. The website we created featuring my newly-written articles took off in a hurry. On some days we would get as many as 10,000 hits, depending on what other sites had linked to it. For whatever reason, we had hit a nerve and people wanted to hear about the *LIBERTY* more than they ever had before.

Shortly afterwards, Mark let me know about the next big project he wanted to start: a book on the *USS LIBERTY* that AFP wanted him to write. He wanted me to help him out with it, utilizing me as both a consultant and an organizer, meaning getting some of the other guys on board as I had with making the *Loss of Liberty* documentary years before.

As far as the book went, Mark's plan was to send a copy to each member of Congress, take out ads on the big talk shows and then start a campaign of media harassment. *"Did you read the book on the LIBERTY, Mr. Senator/Congressman? No? Well, why not? Don't you think that thirty-four Americans being killed by a foreign*

power is worthy of consideration? No? Why not? Settled by an investigation? Are you saying then that the survivors are lying?"

We figured that with the vets alone, there were at least a million who would read the book and go to bat for the *LIBERTY* issue. It was a great plan, I thought.

Again, I lined up the guys who I thought would be the most cooperative. They were each going to be given their own chapter in the book to tell their story in their own words. Mark had already met some of them at the reunion. There were many others who had spoken with him a lot on the phone when putting together his articles for AFP in the run-up to the reunion, so there was already something of a good rapport there between them. Or at least, I thought so.

Once everything was lined up, we went to work. Mark was on the phone with the survivors several hours a day and several days a week. He recorded their interviews, was writing, typing and all the rest.

Everything seemed to be smooth sailing. After forty years of hoping someone would take an interest in our story and do something with it, things finally started moving.

Then, in the midst of putting together the book Mark proposed what I thought to be the impossible - a radio show dedicated to discussing the *USS LIBERTY*. It was to be called *The Liberty Hour*. He was going to find a network to host it and if we couldn't find a network, we would start our own podcast, something I had never heard of before. People in any part of the world would be able to log on with their computers and listen.

To be honest, I didn't think he could pull it off. Starting a website is one thing, since literally anyone can do it, but convincing a network to give us a spot was another thing altogether. Furthermore, although both Mark and I had done lots of interviews - me as a *USS LIBERTY* survivor and he as a reporter for AFP, neither of us had actually *hosted* a show. My expectation was that

he would get the door slammed in his face just like what had happened down in Orange County, California.

Less than twelve hours after he had first brought up the idea, it was a done deal. He called and asked if Saturday mornings from 9 to 11 my time were typically busy for me. When I said, “no” he said, “Good, because that’s when we do our show.”

The network, Republic Broadcasting, agreed to carry our show. It was the same network where Mike Piper’s popular nightly program was heard. Since Mark was a regular guest on Mike’s show he was well-known amongst RBN’s listeners. The deal was that we would do the show for free, which was just fine for us. The only thing we were interested in was getting the word out.

I assumed (foolishly) that the other guys would be ecstatic about the news. After more than forty years, we had our own radio show. Now we were free to say anything we wanted. It was a golden opportunity to bare our souls and purge our systems of the poison that had infected us for the past four decades. With a weekly radio program, the possibilities were literally sky-high. People would hear about what happened to us and would spread the word. Pretty soon, there would be public outrage, the only thing that American politicians really fear. (Besides Israel, of course.)

However, like a fool who never learns from past history, what I had not factored into my optimism was the usual business involving Jim Ennes. As soon as he got wind of the soon-to-debut radio show - a program dedicated solely to the issue of the *USS LIBERTY* - he put his guys to work in trying to sink it before it had even left port.

Again, it was the typical business - “anti-Semitism”, “neo-Nazis” and all the rest. Ennes had put together a “dossier” on Mark as if he (Ennes) were some sort of CIA operative tracking down terrorists. Mark’s association with AFP...The “inflammatory” things he said about Israel and his “conspiracy theories” concerning what really happened on 9/11.

The private email service which we in the LVA used in communicating with each other was alive and abuzz like it had not

been in a long time. I watched in utter disgust as my good friend was made into a dartboard by Ennes and his disciples. All the work Mark had done in writing the articles for us in both AFP and on the net meant nothing. All the things he wanted to do in getting our story out were like poison. All the same guys who had no problem being interviewed by *Hustler* suddenly “found Jesus” and refused to have anything to do with a man who loved his wife, kids and country more than anything on earth. Like someone pouring poison into the town’s well, Ennes sat back and watched the uproar he had caused with glee. What would normally have been a cause for celebration now turned into a huge, ugly, unnecessary fight, and all because - as he put it - the LVA couldn’t associate with “anti-Semites”.

This was laughable for several reasons. First off, Mark was half-Lebanese, making him a Semite himself. Next, “you-know-who” -- meaning the various pro-Israel groups in America -- had already characterized the LVA in such derogatory terms as “anti-Semite” and there was no changing that fact. The ADL had a page on us on their website, listing the LVA and Jim Ennes personally. Ennes wrote regular articles for the *Washington Report On Middle East Affairs*, a magazine at the very top of the list in terms of its “anti-Semitism”. Furthermore, he did all sorts of radio interviews with “anti-Semites”. Within the span of less than a year, he had done five with none other than Daryl Bradford Smith, whose rhetoric and conspiracy theories made Mark look “normal” by comparison.

The guys were torn. They were excited about the show and wanted to be part of it, but Ennes and his crew continued to piss all over our parade. The night before the show, Ennes made one last push to sink the thing, having his disciples send out emails to the entire group, telling them to stay away from next morning’s show.

Nevertheless, when Saturday morning arrived in late February, the day of our first show, I had managed to line up about four of the guys and they showed up as promised. Here I was sitting behind a microphone, hosting a radio show dedicated to telling our story, and despite the fighting of the previous week, I was thrilled. The guys with the guts to show up obviously were happy as well, and it showed itself in their tones on the show. People called in from all

across the country to voice their support; not only for the show but for the *USS LIBERTY* story.

All totaled, the Christening of the *Liberty Hour* radio program was a great success and by all appearances, we had calm, open seas ahead of us. I assumed (again, foolishly) that after Ennes and the others saw there was nothing to fear with the show, they would let go of their hysteria and come onboard.

Sadly, I was wrong.

After the conclusion of the first show, the LVA's email network was once again abuzz with the usual suspects. Now, instead of warning people away from it, they changed tactics by complaining about it. They nitpicked about whatever they could just to make noise. Everything about it was all wrong. It had the wrong name. It aired at the wrong time...It aired on the wrong day. It had the wrong music. It had the wrong commercials. The breaks were too long...It had the wrong people on it. It should be this and it should be that...I should kick Mark off the show and have another *LIBERTY* survivor as co-host and on and on and on.

I sat and read the back-and-forth emails with amazement while shaking my head in disbelief and disgust. I tried dealing with them as patiently as possible, trying not to swamp what was an already-rocking boat, but no matter what I said, they simply shot back with something even more inane. And then in the midst of this, I saw something that caused my blood to boil.

One of the guys who had been working with Mark on the new book and who (to his face) was very gracious and friendly, suggested we "use" Mark in getting our story out, but disavow him publicly. He went further by characterizing Mark - whom I knew to be a great patriot and an equally great father of eight (soon to be nine) as "hateful" and "un-American" in his ideas. According to this individual, my friend (and now, co-host) was a "conspiracy theorist" who was crazy to think for a second that elements within the U.S. government had something to do with the terrorist attacks on 9/11.

My head was spinning. Here we were, the survivors of the *USS LIBERTY* who knew firsthand that our own government was perfectly willing and able to conspire with a third party in committing mass murder for political reasons. Yet they were calling Mark a “conspiracy theorist” whose ideas were “hateful” and “un-American” when he would take what was done to us and apply it to more recent events.

I could see that despite everything he’d done (and was willing to do) in trying to get our story out (more than anyone else I had ever run into in forty years) he was about to be used and abused by the LVA and played for a fool. They were laying a trap for him where to his face they would be all nicey-nice but behind his back would run him down as much as possible in order to appease Ennes. All in all, they were like a group of grouchy, gossipy, grumpy old women who couldn’t be pleased no matter what you did. I was ashamed beyond words.

For my part, there was no way I was going to allow my friend to walk into the mess they were preparing for him. I told him everything that was going on and told him to watch his back; that the people he thought were his friends really weren’t.

Naturally, he was shocked, which lasted for only a few seconds before his well-known temper jumped into the driver’s seat. The next thing I knew, there was an email being sent by him to the group telling them it was all over as far as his involvement with them went. There would be no book featuring their stories and they were not to call in to the show, ever. He also made it clear that he would make sure anyone with two functioning ears heard about the way he had been treated and would let the world know the LVA was not an organization to be trusted; that it was treacherous and untrustworthy and should be avoided like the plague.

He ended his email by pointing out the hypocrisy of Jim Ennes who, while warning the others away from those he characterized as “anti-Semites” was perfectly willing to work with them himself. He pointed out that Ennes had been on Daryl Bradford Smith’s *I Am The Witness* radio show five times in less than a year; a guy who made Mark sound tame.

Mark also let it be known that Ennes had had personal correspondence with the same Willis Carto and Liberty Lobby which he had personally condemned.

Ennes immediately shot back with a threatening email to Mark, calling him a liar, challenging him to produce this “correspondence” and promising to sue him if he didn’t write a retraction. Mark assured him he had the letter and would produce it to Ennes’ great embarrassment if he didn’t lay off. While Mark had his friend at AFP, Mike Piper, dig up the letter, Ennes spent the next few days taunting Mark, saying that he was a liar and had made a fool of himself.

Then, soon afterwards, Mark got an email from Mike Piper which included a scanned copy of the handwritten letter from Ennes attached to it. It was written personally to Willis Carto and provided unsolicited information about the *LIBERTY*. At the bottom of the letter, Ennes (showing he was perfectly willing to work with the very same people he told the rest of us to avoid) added a post-script requesting that he not (“not” being underlined) be mentioned as the source providing this information.

I forwarded the scanned copy of the letter to the other guys as proof that Ennes was a liar and hypocrite. I was sure when they saw this it would be enough to knock some sense into them and make them understand he spoke out of both sides of his mouth.

Sadly, there was nothing. Absolutely nothing. Not a peep. It was as if this thing never even existed. Not only was nothing said or done about Ennes, there was not even any sense of shame or embarrassment on the part of these same elements within the LVA for what they were doing.

Instead, they turned it all around. *They* were the victims; the sacrificial lambs and I - Phillip Francis Tournay - was the bad guy, for warning my friend he was headed into a trap and for starting all this trouble. Not one of them confronted Ennes with his lie. Not one of them sent an email of apology to Mark for what they had said about him behind his back or the way they had conspired against him. For my part, I was kicked off the LVA email service. I

could just imagine Jim Ennes sitting back, watching all of the mess he had created and smiling the whole time.

Ennes, having gotten a free pass (despite being caught red-handed in a lie) and encouraged by the support of silence he received from the rest of the guys, updated his website dedicated to the *LIBERTY*. Right on the front page, he trashed our radio show, AFP, Republic Broadcasting and even Daryl Bradford Smith's, *I Am the Witness* radio show (that he had personally appeared on 5 times) as "anti-Semitic" and said the LVA had no connections whatsoever to them.

Now I was at a very difficult crossroads. The spoken and unspoken demand on the part of the more "active" elements within the LVA was that I had to choose between them vs. what I was involved with now. If I didn't leave the show and abandon my association with Mark, I would be cast out for good.

It was pure madness, plain and simple. It didn't have to be this way. Our long-awaited rescue ship had finally come in, and yet the guys - purely in the interests of appeasing Jim Ennes - were going to remain on Gilligan's Island indefinitely. Mark made the remark that it was no wonder so few people knew about the *USS LIBERTY* and why Congress refused to deal with the issue. If what had just happened to us was in any way indicative of how business got done with the LVA, where opportunities came along that were then chased away, the *LIBERTY* story would die a slow, gradual death. The only testimony concerning the event taking place on June 8, 1967 would be the books floating around written by Jim Ennes, which I now know was exactly the way he wanted it to be.

As one LVA member said in an email during the apex of this whole thing, "*We (the LVA) are our own worst enemies.*"

Truer words were never spoken.

Chapter 28--Moving Out

Despite the fact that neither Mark nor I really knew what we were doing, the radio program took off like a rocket. We slowly eased into our routine and within a few months, I must say we had a damned good show.

The station was pleased as punch. They tracked the numbers of log-ons (listeners over the internet) and week by week the numbers quickly rose. Within a few months, we had been picked up by a half-dozen or more radio stations. There were a few in Texas, a few in Tennessee and a few in other parts of the country. People were sending in emails and letters of support and sponsors were lining up. People we had never met wanted to help out in anyway they could by lining up guests for the program, sending out email announcements, etc.

One thing Mark and I agreed on was that if we spent every week talking about nothing except the events of June 8, 1967, the show would tank. The only way to keep it's momentum and make it grow in popularity was to bring the past into the present and future. People needed to understand that as important as the attack on our ship was, it's real value lay in relation to what is happening today and what will happen tomorrow.

That meant dealing with current events taking place, which - given the fact that Mark and I were both news junkies - was an easy gig.

We started contacting people we thought had a good perspective on what was going on with regards to the wars in the Middle East, which we saw as being a direct result of what happened to our ship forty years earlier. We asked them if they would be willing to come on the show. We sent them small audio clips of the program so they could get a feel for what they were getting into. To our great surprise and appreciation, we were never turned down.

I don't want to look like a name-dropper, but we had some pretty impressive people appearing on the show. Former California Congressman and supporter of the *USS LIBERTY*, Pete McCloskey, former six-term Congressman John Hostettler, former

Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney, CIA analyst Ray McGovern, CIA officer Phillip Giraldi, Ambassador Edward Peck, Israeli dissident Mordechai Vanunu, former Treasury Secretary Paul Craig Roberts, former director of the U.S. Army War College, Alan Sabrosky and dozens of others.

Besides the aforementioned people, we had dozens of others who were experts in some field of expertise dealing with the subject of what was going on these days. We interviewed people who were “on the ground” as they say in this situation, from *Christian Peacemaker Teams* to the *Free Gaza Movement*. The *Free Gaza Movement* raised money to purchase boats which they used to break Israel’s blockade of Gaza in order to bring humanitarian supplies to the besieged people there. On their maiden voyage, they Christened their first ship *SS LIBERTY*, in honor of the thirty-four Americans who died on June 8, 1967. Israel at first threatened to sink them if they attempted to break through the blockade, but in the end, they realized that doing so would be a public relations nightmare due to the boat’s name and therefore let them pass unmolested. Before departing on their voyage, (at Mark’s suggestion) thirty-four red roses were cast into the Mediterranean sea and the names of the men killed aboard our ship were read aloud in their honor and which made international news.

Judging by some of the secondary effects taking place out there in the public sphere, other people were beginning to notice the program as well, and not necessarily friends of the *LIBERTY* issue or of America.

The ADL, one of the most (if not the most) powerful Zionist group in America was monitoring the show and making regular updates on their website. They would itemize things that were said on our program, complete with dates and other “relevant” information.

The ADL was not the only one unhappy with the upwards momentum of the show. I was getting regular phone calls from people with New York accents, telling me they didn’t like what I was saying on the radio and that I had better watch out. They threatened my family, naming some of them by name, including my grandchildren. In a recent instance, I picked up the phone to

answer it, and as soon as I did, whoever was on the other side fired one shot from a pistol and hung up.

It was not just the phone calls in the middle of the night, but actual attempts on my life, letting me know I was walking around with a target on my back as a result of what Mark and I were doing. Twice, within the span of only a few months, someone had loosened the lug nuts on my truck, causing me to almost crash on one occasion and to actually crash on another.

The first time it happened, I was alone doing 75 mph down the highway, when all the sudden the truck started shaking violently. I slowed down as quickly as I could without locking up the wheels and pulled over. I went around to inspect the tires, thinking maybe there was a flat, only to find them all fully inflated. I started checking the lugs and, lo and behold, on both the left rear and right front tires, the lug nuts were all loose. I retightened them, limped into town, got two new rims and had them replaced. I asked the guys working at the tire shop about the likelihood of the lug nuts loosening like that by themselves. The unanimous answer was, “no way”. The boss-man added that in all the years he had spent in this business, he had never seen anything like that before.

Shaken but not thinking too much more about it, a mere few months later I was heading down the same highway with my son in his truck, doing about 75, and again came the violent shaking. As soon as the shaking began, I knew what was going on and told him to pull over as fast as he could. As soon as we got on the right shoulder of the highway, slowing down to around 10 mph, the front right wheel fell completely off the truck, doing so much damage to the frame that the truck was totaled.

I spoke with the police about what had happened. They agreed with me that this was no accident and that someone was out to do me harm. They explained they could not be my personal bodyguard all the time, but that I needed to watch my back and to check my lug nuts and brake lines before going anywhere.

Had I not been who I was and not doing what I was doing with the radio show and other projects, I could have considered the two

events as just a fluke or a simple case of bad luck. However, because of the realities of my life, I knew better.

It was routine for Mark and me to call RBN and speak with the program director at the beginning of each month to get “the numbers”, meaning the previous month’s stats as far as log-ons and downloads of archived shows were going. At one time, we were getting as many as 200,000 downloads a month. (Roughly 7,000 a day) We couldn’t have been happier. We had gotten offers from other networks, asking us if we wanted to jump ship and join up with them. Some of them even offered money but we politely refused, as it would be a betrayal to RBN.

Out on the blogs and forums, people were beginning to talk - a lot. Within five or six months of the show’s start, the number of people talking about the issue of the *USS LIBERTY* seemed to increase exponentially. There were also regular, if not constant references to the new radio program.

Whether our new radio program and this growing awareness were related or not, I don’t know. I’m sure that there had to be some cause and effect associated with it - this would only be natural. What mattered to me more than anything else was that people were beginning to sit up and take notice of the *LIBERTY* story and I don’t think it would be too much a stretch to assume it was at least partly because of our show.

There were also other things happening out there related to the *LIBERTY* in the aftermath of the show, indicating it was making waves - things involving powerful people in powerful places.

In the summer of 2008, around six months after the show had begun and as Israel was ramping up her rhetoric for war against Iran, (or rather, trying to push America into going to war against Iran for Israel’s sake) a story appeared in the *Jerusalem Post* detailing what was an earth-shaking event that received very little notice.

The article, entitled “*U.S. Judge Tells Israeli Navy to Learn Lessons of 'Liberty'*” detailed how A.J. Cristol (the same federal

bankruptcy judge described earlier who wrote the book of lies on the *LIBERTY* attack) had recently been in Israel and held a special symposium there to discuss the “accidents” that had taken place on June 8, 1967 and how they could be “avoided” in the future.

The real story however is that this “symposium” taking place in Israel was the by-product of what had occurred a few weeks earlier, when Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Mike Mullen cut short an official trip he had made to Europe and quickly made his way to Israel in order to meet with his counterpart, Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi. His reason for the hasty trip was to convey to the Jewish state America’s insistence that no “*USS LIBERTY* Part II” take place.

There can be no over-emphasizing how important this was. The issue of the *LIBERTY* had not been discussed between the two countries in this manner since we were attacked forty years earlier. Dead silence for four decades on this topic, and all the sudden America’s top soldier makes a hasty trip to Israel and tells them how important it is for something like this not to be repeated?

Mark called me in an excited voice to tell me all about it. “Do you understand what this means?” he asked. His take on it was that U.S. intelligence had no doubt looked at all the data and concluded Israel was getting ready to do exactly what Mullen was warning them against - another attack on a U.S. ship to then be blamed on another country, most likely Iran.

As far as journalists go, Mark was, believe it or not, the only one who seized on the story and analyzed it for its implications, namely that the U.S. knew Israel was planning another attack on an American ship just as she had in ‘67 and with the same purpose in mind - blaming it on Israel’s enemies and dragging America into yet another war not in her own interests. Mark’s article hit the net and took off like wildfire. His analysis of what took place wound up being echoed by both Ray McGovern and Phillip Giraldi, former high-ranking CIA officials we had had on our program. In links I had been sent in the days and weeks afterwards, it was a trip to listen as the two aforementioned intelligence professionals discussed the importance of the recent event; sometimes using

verbatim certain phrases and words that my good friend had used in the original article he wrote on the topic.

I didn't think Mark and I would ever top what we had already done with getting our own program, or at least not for a long, long time. Then, out of the blue, he called me one day with an idea which I was sure was a bridge too far.

It was August, and a mere month later the UN General Assembly would be convening. Literally, just about every world leader would be there and the eyes of the entire planet would be watching and listening - particularly to Iran's leader, as his country was presently in the crosshairs of both Israel and the U.S.

Mark's idea was to get hold of him and ask him if he would be willing to forfeit a few minutes of his time on the floor of the UN General Assembly in order to have me come forward and speak as a survivor of the *USS LIBERTY*, and absent that, simply for him to mention the *LIBERTY* by name in his speech.

The results would have been tsunamic. Iran's leader getting up in front of literally the entire world and mentioning the unmentionable would have sent shock waves throughout the entire world. If done right, it could have resulted in a chain reaction that would have forced Israel to back down from her war mania and give the rest of us the opportunity of getting a handle on this thing before the whole world went up in smoke.

For Mark, thinking that Ahmadinejad (Iran's president) would be willing to do something like this was not as far-out in left field as the reader may think, since Mark had direct connections with him that resulted in Iran's president having already done him a personal favor just a few months before.

As it turned out, Mark - in addition to being friends with an Iranian reporter (who also happened to be one of Ahmadinejad's personal translators) was also good friends with one of Iran's biggest filmmakers, Nader Talebzadeh, who was a close personal friend of Ahmadinejad. Mark and Nader had met a few years ago in D.C. at the AFP conference after sitting on the same panel discussing

Zionism. After that weekend, Mr. Talebzadeh went back to Iran and gave a glowing report to Ahmadinejad of the event, both of AFP and of Mark. A few months after the conference, some of the reporters at AFP had been invited to go to Iran and meet with Ahmadinejad personally to do an interview with him.

When Mark was helping put together the conference in California, he contacted his friend, Nader, and asked if he would request the president to do a video-tape presentation that would be aired at the gathering.

Amazingly, Ahmadinejad did exactly that, just for us, and which can be seen today if you go to www.youtube.com.

So Mark's idea that Ahmadinejad might be willing to do something like this at the UN was by no means unreasonable. He contacted both Nader and his journalist friend and asked them to present our request to the President. A few days later, the response from them was that Ahmadinejad was very interested in the idea and had told his research team to assemble everything they could on Israel's attack on the *USS LIBERTY* for him to study.

Given the fact that Israel's spy services are considered the best in the world and that virtually all telecommunications in the U.S. are - as described by James Bamford in his most recent book, *The Shadow Factory* - hubbed in Herzilya, Israel, there can be little doubt that the phone calls between Mark and two of Ahmadinejad's close associates were being monitored.

Literally within days of Ahmadinejad expressing his interest in the *LIBERTY* subject as well as the idea of mentioning it on the floor of the UN General Assembly, news articles begin surfacing featuring Rafael Eitan, "former" Mossad chief, in which he revealed that Israel was contemplating kidnapping Ahmadinejad in order to prevent him from coming to the UN the following month.

Mark spoke with his contacts in Iran who made it clear to him that in all likelihood, these recent threats to kidnap the Iranian president were the result of what we were planning. At this point, everyone

involved on the Iranian end of things decided it was best to not pursue the matter at this time.

Naturally, Mark and I were disappointed, but understood that this was the way the ball bounces. In the meantime, we continued with what we were doing, plugging away inch by inch in the desperate attempt to make the American people understand how close to the abyss they were and that if they did not sit up and take an interest in what was going on, they would find themselves in a world of hurt even more than was already the case.

The U.S. presidential elections were coming up and one of the candidates running for president was John McCain, son of the same Admiral John McCain who sold us down the river for thirty pieces of silver years earlier. He was as much out of his mind as a lunatic who escaped from an asylum and wanted war with Iran (and Russia) the way a drunk wants his bottle.

Chapter 29--*USS LIBERTY* - The Unsinkable Truth

I have said it before and will keep saying it until I draw my last breath - God spared us that day, June 8, 1967. We should have been dead. Sunk. Engineers I have spoken to about the attack (and in particular the torpedo blast) have told me repeatedly that had the torpedo hit a foot aft (meaning to the left) instead of where it did, it would have hit the engine room, causing the whole ship to go up like an atomic bomb and we would have gone down in a matter of seconds. We know from eyewitness testimony that the U.S. was just minutes away from nuking Cairo, and had that occurred, it is likely that war between U.S. and the Soviets would have broken out.

One foot - that's what it all boiled down to. WWII - surely the war to end ALL wars - was averted because of twelve measly inches. Some call it luck, others say it means nothing whatsoever...

For me however, I see the hand of a higher power. He, she, it - whatever you want to call this higher power - had plans for us other than being made into fish food that day. That's the reason we were spared.

Why spared? Well, as I said at the beginning of this book, I'm not what you call an "educated" man, so trying to figure out the mind of God is something way beyond me...

But there are some things I just know, things that "education" has no effect on whatsoever. I look at nature, with the way it all functions in perfect order, and even though I don't know the mechanics of it all - whether it's botany, zoology, biology or whatever - I know there is a magic causing everything to click together perfectly, and it was this magic that saved us that day and saved the world.

Plain and simple, we were spared that day so we could serve as a warning to the rest of mankind that a dangerous new creature had taken up residence in our Garden of Eden known as planet earth, a creature without pity or remorse and bent upon sowing discord, war, and suffering everywhere it slithered.

I was always aware of the fact that God spared us for a reason, but really did not understand or appreciate this completely until recent years. The first thing opening my eyes and making me aware of this was 9/11 and everything that has happened afterwards. The second was when I started working with Mark.

Once accepting that I had a mission to carry out, I assumed everything would be smooth sailing and that the higher power bringing it all about would take care of clearing the road before me so that I could carry out this mission.

Obviously, as you have learned up to this point in my story, this has not been the case. It has been roadblock after roadblock after roadblock. My government has done everything but kill me or throw me into prison to keep me from telling this story and one of my own shipmates, sadly, has at times cooperated.

And unfortunately, they have not been the only ones. The same fear of getting on the bad side of Israel causing our government to abandon us these past 42 years and which neutered the LVA is like a virus that spreads everywhere as you will now learn.

In early August 2009, Mark called to tell me he is out of a job, as AFP (through the person of chief editor, Jim Tucker) refused to renew his contract.

The reason Mark was under contract with the paper was because Tucker, upon taking on the job of editor a year or so earlier, had stopped running Mark's pieces and as a result, Mark was not getting paid. Whereas before, AFP would run sometimes two or more pieces a week he had written, now they were dwindling down to one every five or six weeks. As a result, Mark was working for nothing and getting heavily into debt as a result of receiving no paycheck for weeks at a time. Mark tried going up the chain of command but nothing was done. He was finally forced to send a letter of resignation saying he would not send any more material to them.

This caught the attention of a few people and particularly some of the folks there at the paper who could see that under Tucker's management AFP was beginning to go downhill. Tucker did not like dealing with the Jewish issue at all and preferred "safer" topics that were not going to get him labeled as the editor of "that Nazi paper". Once Mark announced he would no longer be submitting any more articles, individuals there, including his good friend Mike Piper, worked out a deal where he would be under contract and receive a paycheck whether Tucker permitted his pieces to be run or not. The contract was to last a year. Even though the amount was substantially lower than Mark was getting before Tucker had taken over as editor, it was enough for him to get by.

As soon as the contract ran out, Tucker refused to renew it and Mark - having learned this dance the first time around - said he would not work for free and therefore would not submit anything unless the contract was renewed.

Mark knew the reason for Tucker not renewing the contract was that he did not like Marks' articles, neither in their content nor construction. Tucker considered Mark to be something of a fire-brand and a liability; forgetting that AFP had been the one to approach him years earlier about writing for them and not the other way around.

When the news got out that one of AFP's more popular writers was being driven out, the paper was inundated with emails and phone calls from angry subscribers, including yours truly. That they would throw this man, a father of nine children out of a moving car like this with no warning, chewed on every fiber of my being. This is not the way you treat people who are loyal and who were literally risking life, liberty and pursuit of happiness for the cause.

On Mike Piper's nightly show, people were calling in and expressing their outrage, saying they would cancel their subscriptions to AFP if Mark wasn't writing for them. Mark called in and asked them not to do this, but to instead keep their subscriptions and encourage others to subscribe as well.

Finally, Tucker, being assailed from every side, wrote an email to Mark in which he spoke out of both sides of his mouth. On the one hand, he denied not running his pieces and then in the next sentence (literally) said the reason he did not run them was because they were nothing more than "Jew-baiting hysteria".

Mark was covering issues no one else would touch. Besides the *LIBERTY*, there was the issue of Israeli spying on America and the buildup to what will be - absent some miracle - the final nail in America's coffin, meaning war with Iran.

Now, Mark was out of a paycheck, and it's wasn't like he was making enough money beforehand that afforded him the chance of saving anything up as a buffer against something like this.

As it turned out however, him losing his job at AFP turned out to be a good thing, because it filled him with the energy he needed to get this book project moving. Within days of him losing his job, we began work on the book you now hold in your hands. As of the moment of this writing, it is literally just a few pages away from being done and it only took all of two months to do. Since that time, he and I have spent hours on the phone a day, almost every day, with me dictating and him typing and editing.

Mark was so busy working on the book that he didn't have time to get mad at Tucker. I on the other hand have not forgotten about it

nor will I forgive him for what he did to my friend and his family. As far as I'm concerned, he's the kind of guy you don't turn your back on, because if you do you'll wind up with a knife in it.

As it turned out, Tucker wasn't the only one in a treacherous mood, something I learned about a month after Mark lost his job with AFP.

One Friday morning in September, Mark called with the bad news that our radio show, *The Liberty Hour* heard for eighteen months on RBN (and by all indicators one of the more listened-to programs on that network) had been cancelled with no warning whatsoever by RBN head honcho, John Stadtmiller.

As Mark related the whole affair to me, he got a call Friday morning from John Stadtmiller informing him that our program was to be "temporarily" cancelled and replaced with a new guy he was bringing on - a former pro-football player who wanted to talk about the "New World Order". Mark, more than a little puzzled, asked if our show was being moved to another day and time. Stadtmiller's response was "no." Mark asked him about the possibility of dividing the two-hour space up, leaving an hour for us and an hour for the new guy, to which Stadtmiller again responded with, "no."

Mark, trying to make sense of all this then said to Stadtmiller, "Okay, John, let me make sure I understand this correctly...You're going to take one of your more listened-to programs with eighteen months experience under its belt, co-hosted by a survivor of the *USS LIBERTY* and dedicated to discussing America and the two wars she finds herself in, and replace it with a show hosted by an ex-football player with no radio experience?"

Stadtmiller immediately became aggressive with Mark, justifying his decision with, "This is my network and I'll decide what goes on here, not you." Mark's response was, "Fine John, do what you want, it's your deal. All I'm asking is that you be honest with me...You say the show is being 'temporarily' cancelled...All right then, when and at what time will we be back on the air?"

Stadtmiller, realizing he was cornered now and that his story about it being “temporarily” cancelled was all a big lie then let the cat out of the bag, something which I’m sure he now regrets doing.

“Look” he said, “the *LIBERTY* thing, it happened, what, forty years ago? It’s ancient history and I think we’ve said enough about it that needs to be said on this network.”

Had he not said that last thing, his story about the show’s cancellation only being a “temporary thing” might have been believable, but in that one statement, he made the fact clear that he did not want the *LIBERTY* issue being discussed anymore on RBN.

The only question remaining is, “why?”

Mark, boiling over with quiet rage and knowing the lay of the land responded to Stadtmiller with, “Well John, it’s your network and you can do whatever you want. I’ll let Phil know about your decision and we’ll just let the chips fall where they may...”

As soon as Mark told me the news, I smelled a rat the same way you know you’ve just stepped in dogshit and it’s all over your shoes. You don’t take a successful, popular, profitable show like this and cut it off at the knees for no reason. I was sure someone had gotten to Stadtmiller and put the heat on him to cancel our show. How else - besides him being a headcase (which many believe to be true) - do you explain something like this?

The reason I assumed someone put the heat on Stadtmiller was simple - personal experience in dealing with matters like these over the last 42 years. The number of occasions I had seen the *LIBERTY* story shut down are too numerous to count. Israel’s attack on our ship was and is the most dangerous story out there as far as the powers-that-be were and are concerned.

The other reason I’m convinced this was not the harmless scenario Stadtmiller would like us to believe but rather that outside forces were involved was something that had recently happened to me

personally, and only a mere two weeks before our radio show got the ax.

A buddy of mine I've known for about twenty years, much younger in age than I and a career NCO (non-commissioned officer) in the Army Rangers called me one day right after we landed our radio show. Because he sees things the same way I do, (particularly when it comes to Israel and the Middle East) he wanted to know how he could pick up the program. After the first time he heard it, he was hooked and called me often to tell me how much he liked it.

A few months later, he got the news he was being deployed, to Afghanistan of all places, and at ground zero, meaning up in the mountains fighting the Taliban. After he got there I would get semi-regular emails from him, telling me how much he liked the show and how the other guys in his platoon liked it as well.

And then one day, the phone rang. It was my buddy, whose name I can't use because I have serious reasons to worry for his safety. He told me what a hellhole Afghanistan was, how much he hates it and can't wait to get out, but they're so short of guys right now that they are putting anything they can in the field.

Then our discussion came around to where it usually does with me, which is Israel. I launched into one of my trademark discussions about what the war was really about, who started it and why. As soon as I did, the line went dead. I assumed it was because of the distance between Colorado and Afghanistan and that it was just a technical glitch.

I found out a few days later this was not the reason.

I get an email from my buddy later that week apologizing for our discussion being cut short.

"Phil," he wrote, "They told me to tell you that you can't talk about things like that with me on the phone anymore..."

And then, as if the aforementioned weren't enough, he added--

"They also want you to know you need to watch your mouth on the radio..."

My friend then went on to describe how it had taken place. Right after our phone call had been cut, he got called into the office of his commanding officer, who told him it would be a "bad career move" if he continued listening to my show or if he talked about it with the rest of the guys in his platoon.

I sat there dazed at what I was reading. They were using my friend to pass along the message to me that I was being monitored and that there were people who did not like what I was saying.

Within days of this taking place, I got another call from Mark, excited in the same way as he had been a year earlier over the news that Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Mullen went to Israel to warn them against another attack on an American ship.

In this case, it was an interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski, former National Security Advisor to President Carter. In the interview, Brzezinski had said that in the event of Israel attacking Iran, the U.S. should attack Israel, adding *"it would be like the LIBERTY, but in reverse."*

Again, I cannot underscore enough how important something like this was. Amongst the power elite in America, the *USS LIBERTY* is something that is just not discussed, much less used as the backdrop in suggesting that America go to war against Israel.

And then, out of the blue, we get the call saying our show has been cancelled. No warnings, no signs of any trouble on the horizon and then - bang - we are gone.

The way it works is like this...These Zionist groups - deeply entrenched as they are - are constantly listening, watching, spying, eavesdropping and everything in between in order to head off problems before they begin. A case in point: the famous murder case years ago of Lacey Peterson and her husband, Scott, that

gripped the nation for weeks on end. Her stepfather, Ron Grantski, was a *LIBERTY* survivor, and in the first interview they did with him on TV, he was wearing his *USS LIBERTY* hat. In the interview, they showed his face only and would not let anyone see the hat on his head saying “*USS LIBERTY*”. In the interviews that followed, he was instructed not to wear the hat.

Likewise with our show. They have it down to a mathematical formula: they look at how much discussion about the *USS LIBERTY* is taking place...They then see a dramatic increase in discussion of it on blogs, forums and even talk radio and then, two guys (one a former National Security Advisor and the other a sitting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs) are talking about it openly in the span of just about a year. They put two and two together and decide that a radio show dedicated to discussing the most covered-up event of the last century hosted by an eye-witness to that event has crossed the threshold in terms of “acceptable danger”. So then, John Stadtmiller (or whoever) gets paid a visit and we are gone.

My gut tells me that Stadtmiller was bought off rather than threatened. These people know networks like RBN are always tight for cash, so the way I envision it taking place is that they come to him, ask what our radio program earns in a year’s time, and then write him a check for five year’s worth in return for which he cancels our show and replaces it with someone less troublesome.

Can I prove a payoff took place resulting in the cancellation of our show? No, in the same way that I can’t “prove” someone deliberately loosened the lugnuts on my truck, but I know what I know and no one except possibly God Himself could ever convince me otherwise.

Mark and I were not the only ones who felt like they got kicked in the gut with the news our show had been cancelled. Mark called Mike Piper and upon telling him the news, Piper could not speak for at least a minute. He just sat there on the phone with his mouth open, trying to speak but only able to make non-distinct noises.

Gary Brummett and Ron Kukal, *LIBERTY* survivors who were becoming a regular part of the weekly program were predictably

not happy at all either. It was yet one more door being slammed in our faces like had happened a thousand times before. Hearing that the show had been cancelled was like ripping scabs off wounds that had just begun to heal. Shortly afterwards, both of them let discouragement get the best of them and said they were hanging up their involvement in *LIBERTY* business for good.

Mark wrote up a short statement describing the cancellation and sent it out to let everyone know the show was gone as well as the details surrounding its demise.

To my great shock, the reaction was, well, shocking. Mark and I were being inundated with emails from people wanting to know what the hell was going on. They then turned their wrath on John Stadtmiller and RBN. Both were being carpet-bombed with angry emails and phone calls, asking him accusingly who put pressure on him and comparing him to Judas with his thirty pieces of silver. Stadtmiller was in panic mode and given the fact that he was notoriously-well known for walking all over people, he found himself in a sea of enemies with no friends.

A few days later, Mike Piper was at the offices of AFP and heard someone yell out for Jim Tucker to pick up the phone, that it was none other than John Stadtmiller.

Jim and John did not know each other at all, but Stadtmiller, knowing that Tucker and Mark did not get along, and Tucker, hearing that John and Mark did not get along, and both of them desperate to find someone sympathetic to each other's plight, decided to "jine forces".

A few minutes after the phone call, Mike Piper was then paid a visit by Jim Tucker who, finding someone else (John Stadtmiller) now just as unpopular as he was, got into a discussion with Mike where he characterized me as, "that asshole Phil Tourney". He ended his comments by saying he knew he had made the right decision in "getting rid of that little prick", meaning Mark.

The ugliness did not involve only Tucker and Stadtmiller. A listener to our show forwarded an email exchange he had had with

Jim Ennes who, upon hearing our show had been cancelled, said he was “delighted”, saying it was an “embarrassment”, an “anti-Semitic rant” by two “out of control hosts”, only had “ten listeners”, did not “show up on google” and had “no audience”. When the listener challenged Ennes’ assertions, saying the show was extremely popular and that when it was “googled”, it turned up page after page of hits, Ennes immediately clammed up and said he did not want to discuss the matter further.

As it would turn out, the desire on the part of those responsible for the show’s cancellation miscalculated. Within days of the cancellation and all the talk surrounding it, Mark and I received offers from no less than six other networks who wanted to pick up our show. As of the moment of this writing, we are just a few days away from the re-debut of *The Liberty Hour* radio program, and the network picking us up lists hundreds of affiliate stations across the country.

And just like our ship being attacked forty-two years ago, what appeared to be a defeat actually turned into a victory. Had Mark not been canned from AFP you, the reader, would not be reading this book right now, and had we not been canned from RBN, *The Liberty Hour* radio program would not have been picked up on an even bigger network.

Indeed, the Lord works in mysterious ways.

Chapter 30--The Eyes of a Serpent

People ask me all the time, “Why is it so few people know about the *LIBERTY* story? It’s such a fascinating, heart-wrenching account and it should have taken off like wildfire by now...”

Well, of course, the standard answer is that people in high places made sure the story did not get out, which is the truth. Sadly though, it is more true than most people realize.

As with so many things associated with the attack on our ship and the aftermath, the whole affair is mired in tragedy and unnecessary

suffering, and when I say “unnecessary” I mean not only the attack itself (and its subsequent cover-up by the U.S. government) but also what has happened during the twenty-plus years of us trying to tell our story.

As painful as it is, nevertheless at the end of the day, after more than two decades of trying to tell our story to the world, the question we are forced to ask is, what have we accomplished? What do we have to show for all the time, money and tears spent in testifying about an act of war against the United States?

I’m not here to cut down my shipmates. That’s something I would never do. I’ll leave that ugly business for our enemies, who from day one have called us liars, delusional, Jew-haters and, believe it or not, “unpatriotic” for refusing to go along with the lies they’ve peddled saying the attack on our ship was all a case of “mistaken identity”.

In the final analysis however, the fact is that outside of a few books, a few documentaries, a library and a memorial in Minnesota, there isn’t much out there as a testimony to what happened June 8, 1967, despite the fact that the entire world came within a hair’s breath of a nuclear war. The Cuban Missile Crisis is common knowledge to just about everyone, and as serious as it was, pound for pound, it does not compare with the danger the human race faced when our ship was almost sunk.

I say all this not as some grumpy old man lamenting his fleeting years on earth, but rather as someone who was witness to something he wants to get off his chest. This book is, in effect, my last testimony concerning an act of war against my country and I want the record set straight as far as to what I saw that day and every day since then. I hope that as a result, the guilty will get what’s coming to them and America will again be free, prosperous and more importantly, safe.

In the interests of protecting the innocent, (including yours truly) I must be deliberately vague about certain things here, since the person(s) who are the subject of this chapter would love nothing

more than to drag me and this book into court in the interests of shutting down the whole discussion we are having here.

It pains me to say the things I am going to say, but just as it pained me to recount the events described in the previous chapters of this book, it is a part of the story that needs telling, so here it goes...

As I said, I get no pleasure saying the things I'm about to say, and I definitely do not impugn all my fellow shipmates. Down to the last man, including me, all of them suffer from PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) and as such, are subject to all sorts of mood and psychological disorders.

PTSD is a terrible thing to live with, as I and all my loved ones can attest. It never goes away, but merely fluctuates between bad and unbearable. It is like an infectious disease that spreads to everyone in the vicinity. Like the body parts of my dead shipmates lying on the deck of our ship on the day we were attacked, entire families and marriages have been blown to pieces over the last forty-two years as a result of this terrible disorder.

Having said that however, there are a few individuals who can't claim PTSD as their defense for what they've done, not necessarily to me but to the *LIBERTY* cause. After more than twenty years of dealing with them closely and watching what they do, I am convinced now more than ever that there is more to our rocky history than simply the predictable clash of personalities occurring whenever people work in close quarters on a highly-charged, emotional subject.

Before the reader assumes that what I'm about to say is the product of paranoia or an over-active imagination, I would ask him or her to consider a few things first...

The attack on our ship, in addition to being an act of war and mass murder, almost started WWII between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. In many ways, it is more serious than what happened four years earlier when our president, JFK was assassinated. As we know from eyewitness testimony, (not only from Navy personnel but also ambassadors stationed in the Middle East) we came within just a

few minutes of nuclear weapons being dropped on Cairo. What's worse is that the U.S. government was involved in it up to its eyebrows at every level. The attack on the *LIBERTY* was nothing less than an arrangement between the U.S. and Israel to get a war started in the region between two nuclear-armed superpowers that could have quickly escalated into the unthinkable.

In other words, it was something involving the highest stakes possible. The world coming within just a few minutes of nuclear weapons being released isn't something forgotten about in a day, a month or in forty-two years.

Of course, what went wrong that day is that we did not sink as they'd planned. Therefore, every day we, the survivors have spent above ground has been like a ticking time bomb in the minds of those who tried to kill us and who tried to kick off WWII. I imagine they don't sleep a wink at night. They probably lie awake, terrified that one of these days, one of us is going to tell our story to the right person at the right time and indeed it will take off like wildfire and then those responsible for murdering thirty-four of my shipmates will be dealt with the way criminals should.

Furthermore, there is the HUGE economic interest involving this whole thing to consider, conservatively estimated to be at about \$30 million dollars a day, (minimum) and it is Israel. Without that money, (to say nothing of all the political protection she gets from the U.S.) she would cease to exist, and if the American people were to find out what she did to us that day, we can be rest assured that the sacred cow known as the U.S./Israeli relationship would find its head on the chopping block.

This being the case, we can only assume these same criminals made sure all their bases were covered as much as possible and that "insurance policies" were taken out in making sure their worst nightmares didn't come true.

And what would such an "insurance policy" look like? Simple. They can't start killing each of us *LIBERTY* survivors off one at a time - that would be too suspicious. An operation employing hi-tech surveillance/eavesdropping equipment in watching everything

we do, everywhere we go and everyone we talk to would cost a fortune in man-hours while yielding very little.

All they need is someone on the inside, someone in our midst to watch over everything we do, everything we say and who we meet with. Like a babysitter whose job is making sure things don't "get out of hand", this person's job would be to watch, listen and monitor everything, and whenever someone within the group starts getting a little rowdy, to shut him down and, if possible, drive him out of the group.

As I said, I've had suspicions about this for some time, but could never prove it. The idea that someone within our "family" would willingly allow himself to be used as an agent for the very same people who tried to kill us was as unthinkable to me as the idea of our own government setting us up to be murdered would have been the day before we were attacked.

Maybe it's my advancing years or the fact I no longer carry the naiveté that comes with youth, but I am now ready to say with a high degree of confidence that I believe indeed there are now (and have been) individuals within our group commissioned with the very same "baby-sitting" job I described a few paragraphs back.

The way it works is this. These persons are approached by someone from the "inside", meaning the Navy, NSA, CIA or whatever. They're told, *"Look, we're on your side, and there are a lot of us working to get the truth out about what happened to your ship. But we have to move slow with this thing, because the American people will never believe it if we don't take our time and do it right. Loudmouths who move too fast scare the American people into the other side's camp and especially if they get called Jew-haters and anti-Semites, so it's your job to make sure the loudmouths get silenced."*

And of course, in order to keep these individuals on the hook, they are given a regular paycheck to cover their "expenses" as babysitters. To these individuals, everything sounds great. They are working with "patriotic" people on the inside trying to get the story

out. They feel “connected” and protected and of course the money certainly does not hurt things.

And in the meantime, the story is eeked out in one harmless, ineffective drip at a time. The survivors get old, get tired, and eventually fade away. The next thing you know, the *LIBERTY* story blows away like dust in the wind. Forever.

No need for assassinations. No need for false charges and imprisonment to silence the story. Simply let it die a slow, gradual death, one of “natural causes” that rouses no suspicion. The next thing you know, the murderers who almost started WWII quietly declare *“Mission Accomplished... We couldn’t sink the LIBERTY itself, but we did manage to sink the story.”*

Can I prove these individuals are working as agents for outside forces within the group?

No, but again, as I said earlier, I can’t prove that someone deliberately loosened the lugnuts on two of my vehicles within the span of just a few weeks to do me harm...nor can I prove that the phone call I received where nothing was heard except the sound of a pistol being fired was a threat that if I didn’t shut up I would be killed...

...but I know what I know and no one except maybe God Himself can convince me otherwise.

In many ways it’s like a spouse who suspects his or her better half is being unfaithful. It is not necessarily something as conclusive as finding that better half in bed with someone else or overhearing a whispered phone conversation, but rather a hundred small things indicating that something stinks.

And again, as I look back at the last twenty-plus years and see how relatively little we have to show for our efforts, coupled with a hundred other things that smell bad, I cannot help but conclude we have been penetrated.

Do we really assume for a minute that the same people who tried to murder us all that day wouldn't do something like this? Again, why would they not? They have thirty-four BIG reasons to do it - namely the murder of my shipmates. For these people, buying someone off within the group is pocket change.

I know the reader - understandably - needs more proof than simply my intuition, so let me relate a few things that have happened to me personally. One thing occurred nearly two decades ago and the other was just a few years ago.

At one of the earliest get-togethers of the *LIBERTY* survivors, I was downstairs at the hotel having a cup of coffee. The day's events were not scheduled to begin for quite a while. As I was sitting there, two of my shipmates came up to me and said, "We've got some time to kill. Let's go for a ride and take in some of the sights around town."

We went out and got into the rental car one of them had for the weekend, and started driving. I was seated in back. After about fifteen minutes, the guy driving adjusted his mirror so he could see me and I could see him.

"Tourney," he said, "this is a team-effort project we're all involved in, and in order to make this thing work, everybody has to play his part. We have to work as a team and that means everybody, including you, has to be a team player..."

They then went on taking turns, telling me what kind of opportunities lay ahead for me as a member of the "team". TV and radio appearances, interviews in the newspaper, speaking tours and, last but not least, lots of money.

Part II detailed the requirements on my part if I wanted to be on the team. The first thing was that I needed to get clearance from "headquarters" about anything I was going to do involving the *LIBERTY*. No interviews, contacts, deals, etc. without involving the "big cheese" in it ahead of time, and we all knew who the big cheese was.

Next was the kind of verbiage I used when talking about the attack. They wanted me to be “nice” in my language and as bland as possible. I was not allowed to say “murdered,” “slaughtered” or anything else that could be considered “inflammatory” in any context.

The other event I’ll describe is equally pregnant with implications.

A few years ago, a third party gave me copies of communications between a survivor and someone claiming to be an Israeli national with strong family ties to Israeli intelligence. I have every reason to believe these communications are 100% authentic and can produce them if legally required, but will do so *only* if legally required, as I do not want to divulge the name of the *LIBERTY* survivor involved in all this.

In these communications, this *LIBERTY* survivor (even after learning the person contacting him was an Israeli national with personal ties to Israeli intelligence) was nauseatingly friendly and accommodating, and especially when this person started talking about sending money to help out with the *LIBERTY* cause.

As bad as it was to watch this survivor get all chummy with someone who could have been a spy of some sorts, the worst part was what followed.

After this Israeli national asked a few probing questions, this survivor began bashing his own shipmates. These men - some of whom had held important positions on the LVA board and were war heroes - were characterized as “unstable”, “extremist”, “crazies”, whackos”, “nut-jobs”, and of course, tarred with the obligatory “Nazi” and “anti-Semite” slurs by this survivor who then asked that the correspondence he was having with this “Israeli national” be kept “private”.

Had I not seen it with my own two eyes I would never have believed it. Like watching as your wife walks into a hotel room with another guy, it was like getting kicked in the stomach with an iron boot. Once seeing it however, lots of things started to make sense to me, particularly controversies having taken place in the

And after reading these communiqués, I understood there was something deeper, darker and more dangerous dwelling in our midst, like waking up and finding a rattlesnake coiled up next to you and staring you in the eyes from just a few inches away.

And that snake, tragically, is still there to this day, watching and listening to everything we do and say, and yet so few see it for what it is.

Just as Israel was watching us on the morning of the attack, slowly flying overhead with friendly waves as she surveilled the ship, studying us intently in finding our most vulnerable parts, so too is she watching us to this very day, and this is the main reason why as of this moment, relatively few people know about what happened to us, and why Israel is able to get away with everything she does today.

Closing Arguments

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury...

You have heard the evidence and from no less than an eyewitness to mass murder of American servicemen on the high seas. The other side claims it was all a big accident, like inadvertently stepping on someone's toe, but I say different, because the excuse offered by the murderers of my shipmates does not jive with what I saw that day.

First off I want to make something crystal-clear: I don't hate all Jews, just the SOBs who tried to murder me that day. Like many people, I've had the pleasure of knowing Jews throughout my life and befriending many of them. Furthermore, as I pointed out earlier in this book, I always nursed a special compassion for what they had gone through during WWII, and before Israel attacked my ship and killed my shipmates, I was cheering them on in their war against the Arabs.

I'm forced to say all this because Israel and her supporters have been very effective in tarring anyone with the charge of being a

“Nazi,” “Jew-hater” and “anti-Semite” merely for telling the truth about her actions, and the survivors of the *USS LIBERTY* have been no exception. We have been called every name in the book simply for telling the truth about what happened to us that day when the Jewish state attempted to murder us all and sink our ship to the bottom of the sea so that it could then be blamed on “the Arabs”, thus dragging America and the irreplaceable blood of her precious sons into the dirty business of Israel and her wars.

My main reasons for telling this story are threefold - the past, the present and the future.

The past is obvious, because of what I went through.

The present is obvious as well, in that America now finds herself in the middle of two disastrous wars as a result of what happened to us forty-two years ago...

And, last but not least, the future, which, of all the three, is the most frightening.

The reason the future is the more frightening of the three is because Israel - by her own admission - has big plans, and none of them good. Her people are governed by a Jim Jones/take-no-prisoners/all-or-nothing mentality with the entire world as the prize. As they see it, the planet and everything in it - not just some tiny slice - is their oyster, and in the event that they don't get their way, they plan to burn the place down to prevent others from having what they consider to be theirs by divine right.

This is not my interpretation. I am merely reporting what others - many of them speaking from positions of authority and influence in the Jewish state - have plainly stated. Israel is the only nation that has threatened to unleash nuclear weapons upon the entire world if she doesn't get her way, and we need to take this threat seriously for the simple reason that she means every word of it.

What's happened and what is taking place right now is but a small glimpse of what is to come if she is not stopped. An entire nation (Iraq) has been destroyed on Israel's orders and another nation

(Afghanistan) is well on the way. After that it will be Iran, then Pakistan, then Syria, then Lebanon, on and on and on. It will never end, because Israel - as I described earlier in this book - is like a vampire and she needs blood to survive.

However, as much as this is a terrifying story and a tale of tragedy, it is also a story of hope...

As Israel and her traitorous supporters here in America tell it, we, the *USS LIBERTY*, were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The truth however, is that as far as their plans that day went, we were in the right place at the right time. They meant to sink us, but failed, and failed miserably, because we refused to lie down and take it. Instead, we fought back with everything we had and at the end of the day, we won and they lost.

In many ways the *USS LIBERTY* was a foreshadowing of what America would become today. We are battered and beaten to a pulp, and by these same people. Our economy is crashing as a result of the two wars we are fighting for Israel's benefit and the country is coming apart at the seams...

But yet, as of this moment, we are still afloat, even if barely. Yes, like our ship that day, we are listing badly to one side and it won't take much to tip us over...

But, as surely as I am here writing these words to you right now, I am living proof that miracles do exist. I should have been dead that day, but God had other plans, and maybe, *just maybe*, God has other plans for America as well if we are willing to accept the challenge.

Miracles do not happen for free. There are conditions associated with them. Bringing forth new life into the world in the form of a baby is a miracle, but there are responsibilities associated with this miracle. Long, drawn-out and oftentimes painful responsibilities...

...and likewise with saving our nation. God will do the miracle if we will just do the follow-up work.

As I said, we were saved that day, and not just because the Almighty thought we were all swell fellas. Down to my very bones, I know we were saved so we could go out and do for others what God did for us. That is why I am here today speaking to you, my fellow Americans.

A friend of mine said something to me once which I will never forget - "*Patriotism begins with knowing who your enemy is.*"

Our ship, America, has been struck and is taking on water - FAST - and the people responsible for this act of war want us dead, just as they wanted me and my shipmates dead forty-two years ago.

America has enemies, and not the people we have been told. Rather, they are those who come to us bearing smiles and acting like friends, as all the while - like Judas - they plot their betrayal in the dead of night...

The question now is whether or not we will view this vampire for what it is and deal with it as any nation with the will to survive would. Will we continue to surrender our neck to its fangs and forfeit all that has been fought for and won by the brave men (and women) who came before us?

Or rather, will we abide by the words of Thomas Jefferson, the writer of our own Declaration of Independence who once said--

"The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants..."

The patriots of the *USS LIBERTY* refreshed that tree with their blood forty-two years ago...

...And perhaps now it is time the tyrants who murdered them do their part as well.

October 18, 2009

Phillip Francis Tourney

Proud Survivor, USS LIBERTY

Attacked by the Air and Naval Forces of the State of Israel on June 8, 1967

Acknowledgements

Although it goes without saying, nevertheless for the record let me make this clear--this book is dedicated to the 34 brave Americans who had their lives stolen from them June 8, 1967 by the state of Israel. Not only dedicated to the 34 men killed, but to the families of these men as well, who no doubt have not had a day go by they did not weep either openly or within the private confines of their hearts for the loved ones they lost that day. May this book bestow some small shred of honor upon those killed, honor they did not receive from their government or their country and whose deaths to this day continue to cry out for justice.

I do not have the memory of my youth, so no doubt there will be people I should remember but do not. My apologies to them beforehand.

First and foremost I must thank all those who worked hard to get the story out concerning what happened to us. In addition to the thousands of man-hours spent by the survivors and families themselves in going to conferences and other events dedicated to telling the story, credit goes to Peter Hounam for his book *Operation Cyanide* (later made into a BBC documentary) and James Scott's most recent *Attack on the Liberty*. Also, former Congressman Paul Findley's *They Dare To Speak Out*, best-selling author and commentator on all things dealing with the NSA James Bamford and his book *Body Of Secrets*, former Senate Finance Committee Counsel Jeff Gate's *Guilt By Association*, former Indiana Congressman John Hostettler's *Nothing For the Nation*, and the recently-published book from American Free Press

Ship Without A Country, co-authored by Mark Glenn and Victor Thorn.

To my good friend Michael Collins Piper, brilliant writer and talk show host. Few have done as much as you in getting the story about what happened to us to so many people. I will always hold you close to my heart like a blood brother.

To the Glenn family for all their support and in particular to the one and only Stefania who edited this book and polished it into the final product you see today.

To my good friend Mark, without whom this book would not exist. 42 years of this being bottled up inside me was put down on paper in just over 42 days and due to his patience and magic with words.

To the amazing “JP” who--in addition to being a great friend, gave us lots of good council on how to make this thing fly, as well as all the time he spent doing the audio version of the book.

And, saving the best for last, I must tell the world about the one person who did not abandon me during decades of suffering that no innocent human being should have to endure--my wife Lisa. I shudder to think what would have become of me had she not become my wife.

I love you Lis and always will.

WHAT I SAW THAT DAY

PHILLIP F. TOURNEY,
USS Liberty Survivor
and MARK GLENN

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO



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WHAT I SAW THAT DAY



William L. McGonagle, Captain of the USS Liberty the day it was attacked by Israel, June 8, 1967, holding up a .50 caliber machine gun bullet fired by Israel (bought and paid for by the American taxpayer) and later retrieved from the hull of the USS Liberty.

All historical events and their aftermath can be boiled down to a simple 2-word question--"**What if?**". Like a well-built Swiss watch with a myriad of moving parts and mechanisms, the alignment and synchronization of historical events lead to certain outcomes, and sometimes the mere absence of one piece can have dramatic results.

Today, as we consider the caldron of problems in which America finds herself, and especially with regards to the two disastrous wars she is fighting for the benefit of the Jewish state in Iraq and Afghanistan that to date have resulted in the death and wounding of tens of thousands of American servicemen and women, the one event that bears special consideration and application of the question "What if" is Israel's attack on the USS LIBERTY and, more importantly, the fact that nothing was done to rectify it.

Until this--the prime mover of America's slide into the garbage bin of history--is dealt with as it should be and indeed WOULD have been were it any other country, all other discussions are tantamount to Nero's fiddling while Rome burns.

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