

I Walked Among Them

In September of 2004, I received a phone call from a Defense Contractor offering me a job working in Afghanistan. In the two years I worked there, I have seen much insight, on not just the War on Terror, but Life itself.

I worked as an electrician at the airbase in Kandahar, Afghanistan, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. This is the land of the Taliban. The land with scorpions scurrying across the infectious dust and the lethal sawscale viper that curls up under the tents. It is the land of the jackals who scream out in the darkness, like gargoyles that have been set free. This is one the heaviest mined countries in the world, where you dare not walk beyond the fence. It is a hell where the *direct sunlight* temperature in the Summer of 2004, reached 150; and the winter brought temperatures in the mid-teens with cold flood waters that broke a 10 year drought. The people who inhabit this land have to be yielding, for the land is not.

On several projects, I had the opportunity to work with these people and have found them very simple and diligent, yet I had an unexplainable fear of them; it seemed as if they were not even human. They squat everywhere, which I guess it makes sense as where can you sit in a desert?

I have given some thought as to why I feel this way. I have a compassion for them, yet I would not even look into their eyes, for fear of looking into the eyes of an untrusting animal. But there was something about them I could not pinpoint. Then it hit me. It's the eye contact, for they look at your eyes to read you. Most people will make casual eye contact with you, and then look away if you hold it, but the Afghan people look at you, not feeling uncomfortable at all. When they looked at me, they were simply communicating without words. Searching to see what type of person, this strange one in their land was; and when the eye contact is held, they smile. I realized I distrusted them more than they, me; and who is in whose land? These people have taught me the eyes convey more than words can.

Throughout my months of working there, I have taken time to write down certain thoughts, especially those things engraved in the hidden coves of my mind. I must share some with you during this discussion. I wrote these on the various dates listed.

January, 2005.

The other day, I noticed a big soldier walking off the flightline with a large bag draped over his shoulder, big enough for me to fit in. A stuffed backpack hung off one elbow and his Kevlar helmet hung off the other as he clutched a duffle bag. He had his rifle slung over his other shoulder and his sidearm strapped to his thigh. His body armor around his waist added 10 pounds or more of additional weight. He was a big man and he was tired. I watched him stumble slightly on the loose rocks underfoot. I stopped my vehicle and rolled down the window.

“Hey man, you need a lift?”

“Yes sir! You got room for my gear?”

“In the back.”

He opened the side door of the van and I felt the vehicle shift under the weight he deposited. Sitting in the cab, he reeked with the smell of jet fuel and body odor.

“I really appreciate the ride, Sir.”

Sir? I always felt strange having these people call me Sir. I tried for years to get my kids to address me as Sir, and here these people do it out of habit.

“Man it feels good to be back! They sent me to FOB Cobra (Forward Operating Base) to work on a fuel line for 10 days and it ended up being over a month.”

“So you missed Christmas?”

“Yeah, and New Years! Man, we got fired on every other day. Even the SF (Special Forces) says it’s too hot! Man, the first thing I’m gonna do is take a long hot shower. A *real* shower. Then get some *good* chow. Man! My roommates will be surprised to see me…”

He talked about how good it was to be back, over and over. When I dropped him off, he extended his big hand and thanked me again. I tried to tell him he was the one to be thanked, but my emotions wouldn’t let the words out.

On my flight to Afghanistan, from Houston to Paris on Air France, I was one of about 35 people in our group. About midway, when the cabin shades are pulled so people can sleep, a few passengers gathered in the back to talk and drink wine. My seat was second from the back, so I couldn’t help but stay awake from the giggling and laughing. I realized several of our guys were in back flirting with two pretty French girls. At one point, one of the girls rushed

forward four or five rows to her companions and pointing to the back, rattled off some French about `Afghanistan'. I realized those guys in back were bragging about going to Afghanistan. To become heroes and work on foreign soil while having to watch out for the deadly Taliban.

No. We're not heroes. We were going to Afghanistan to make money. Just money and the ability to say, "Hey! I've been to *Afghanistan!*" (spoken in a deep macho voice) Do you think we are here for anything else? You take away our pay and what do you think we will do? We'll go home.

Any hat we wore had to have the company logo on it; so when we bought one we took it to a small embroidery shop on base to have the logo put on it, usually with our name and radio call sign. Some people bought jackets and had all sorts of words and dates embroidered on it, bragging about being in Afghanistan; as if it's a symbol of their accomplishments. Some of them would go home within a month or less - usually the first rocket attack culled those out. There were even some who refuse to get off the plane on arrival.

Most of the people who went over there to make money were worth their weight and did good work for the Military. There were others who just should not be there, yet still ended up on that side of the world to support the War on Terror. Yet on the other side of the world were loved ones from the soldiers there, who struggled to make ends meet, while praying for their safety. These soldiers joined the military knowing the pay is low. When the rockets came, they couldn't decide it's time to go home. Yes, I will concede, the soldiers had many things to make their service comfortable. The food served is actually good. I was quite surprised at the menus. Practically anything you could want for a meal. Even fresh fruits. Mangos, kiwi, bananas, etc. At times we got lobsters and crab legs. Steak was served often, even for breakfast. After savoring a meal, they could go to the fully equipped gym, with an assortment of exercising machines. All the luxuries are there for the military to make them a bit more comfortable. ...and for those of us who were there for the money.

There was even entertainment. Just before one Christmas, Robin Williams came and gave a quick show. He is a very funny comedian, actor and producer. His humor is a bit rough, but the show was packed. Robin Williams had several other people with him, including John Elway, the retired quarterback for the Denver Broncos. After the show, I waded through the crowd to see Robin Williams `in real life'. But a few weeks later I noticed a picture on my foreman's desk, of him with the famous actor. Just the two of them. My boss had a big smile on his face as anyone would; but I noticed something I had not seen before. Robin William's eyes. I have not seen the eyes of an adult more drained

of energy than his. Yet he stood up there during the show and gave a performance with vigor and vitality. I don't know, but I would think with all the money he has, his time and health were given for the entertainment of those soldiers. ... and for those of us who were there for the money.

When I was a young innocent boy in a parochial school, I remember a nun defining a hero as someone who gives their life for others. I had assumed giving one's life meant, dying. I don't feel that way now. I am convinced; someone can give their life for others and yet live. These soldiers are examples. Yes, the military has its share of losers. They are the ones who keep a supply of hash, opium and other drugs purchased from the locals. It is a shame, but it is truth. So, we eliminate those soldiers because they are not giving their lives for others; instead they are destroying their lives for themselves. Just like on the streets of many cities. The losers.

If you were to talk to those people who are in it for the common good of mankind, you will find few who would admit to being heroes. My father served America during World War II at an airbase in Texas. He had talked about it from time to time, always as an interesting story; but I do not ever recall hearing him complain about having to serve. If I had asked him if he regretted serving America, he would have found that to be an absurd question; and yet he would not see himself as a hero.

In 2004, we had one of our co-workers pass away in his sleep. He was over there, knowing he had health problems so he could make a better life for his wife and two young kids. Is he a hero? To his family he is. Is being a hero relative?

When we learned of his death, I really didn't think of it as anything but a very sad and unfortunate circumstance of being over there. So, I was a bit surprised when supervisors started a fund to send to his family. The company gave a memorial service for him at the airfield when his body was brought in and solemnly placed in the big C17 for a final ride back to his family. All of our employees stood in several rows on either side of the procession. I have never before, heard so much silence come from over a thousand people. And add to that, hundreds of military personnel attending a service for a young man they never knew. Would you see that as heroes honoring a hero?

It would be just a few months later when the Special Forces would have a solemn procession of their own, one of many more to come for one of their fallen comrades.

July, 2005

I watched something both beautiful and sad today. Soldiers from all the different forces gathered in a formation. Not knowing what was happening, I sat and waited, wishing I had my camera. Not just Americans, but British, Canadians, a few Romanians and Dutch. Then I saw a long string of soldiers marching in double file from the Special Forces (SF) compound, heading out to a C17 sitting out on the runway, with its big ramp in the back lowered down. None of the men were smiling; and then I remembered seeing the flag at the SF compound at half mast.



As the main formation marched out to the big plane, I noticed several carpenters who work in the SF compound walking with them, so I followed behind. By the time we got out onto the flightline, I guess there were about 2 to 3 thousand soldiers standing behind the big plane. I went over and stood under one of its huge wings to get out of the sun. After removing my hat, the sun felt extremely hot.

Several members of the ANA (Afghan National Army) showed up and spoke to some of the American officers through an interpreter. We waited quietly for about 30 or 40 minutes, until a procession of five vehicles drove up. As the last one went by, I noticed it had a coffin draped with an American Flag. From where I was standing, I could not see where they parked, but a few minutes later someone spoke a firm command and all the troops went to attention. Another command and they all threw a salute, each in their customary way. Several of the flag holders lowered their flags, but the American flag stayed tall and firm.

Minutes later, a photographer led the procession filming the scene. Something like this should never be forgotten. Six or eight men carried the coffin up the ramp to the plane, followed by about a dozen more.

Another command was given and all withdrew their salutes. A few moments of silence, then another command was spoken, and another salute made, and again the flags were lowered; and another coffin brought on board.

After a few minutes, the ramp on the plane was drawn up, and with commands the troops turned and march back to their camps.

I have to make sure I remember the families these men left behind; even just a moment or two during the next week. It's the least I can do for them. The photographers will make sure these heroes will stay in the minds of those of honor, like their comrades who will continue to fight terrorism.

It's sad. People all over the world will view this war as something it's not. They want so much to point fingers and make accusations, yet ignore the real cause of terrorism. Slowly, over time, each country will be affected by this cancer. And yet some will still have the audacity to blame the US. They want us to run and hide in a corner the way some of them do. I hope America never succumbs to that.

This is one of those days I feel tired all over. I will go to bed early this evening.

July 4, 2005

This is the morning of July 4th, here in Afghanistan. In my 50 years of Life, I have had admiration for those in the Armed Forces; and working with them I have acquired a profound sense of respect for them.

Everyone in the Civilized World has seen the effects of Terrorism in the world, via Television on September 11, 2001. And the vast majority of the world has now become complacent with it. Like a cancer that spreads through a body, it becomes accepted until the body succumbs. Even though we daily see the hatred directed to us on TV and the Internet, some people will still take the stand: We are doing what we don't need to be doing. They want us out of Iraq and Afghanistan; and they think by leaving, we will end the hostilities.

The Al-Qaeda wants us dead. They want me dead. They want my children dead and they want my grandchildren dead. To the terrorists it is not a choice. This war will continue beyond generations. It will never end because the hatred for those of us, who are free, will never end.

Those attractive people on the Silver Screen, who think they are heroes because they portray heroes, will tell us how to live our lives. And ignorant people will listen and applaud their words. I will follow those who direct us with knowledge and understanding, and those soldiers who keep fighting for a just cause, even after their comrades have fallen.

Those people who twist the words of our Constitution to create what they want, have no idea the value of our freedom, and what it takes to maintain it. Everything has a price. Look at Education. It's not free. It takes time, money and determination. Good health is not free. That fine house on the hill is not free. The fancy cars in the garage are not free. The more profound it is, the more costly; and I cannot imagine something more valuable in this life, more profound, than our freedom. Those brave gentlemen, who signed that precious document almost 230 years ago, knew well the price of freedom. A freedom *we* still enjoy from *their* sacrifices.

Life is good. Even here in Afghanistan. Because we are the most powerful, and thus the freest country on earth. We have a Freedom that did not come without a price.

Sept 10, 2005

I attended a Mass for an Airman killed in action. Instead of the usual dozen or so people attending Saturday evening Mass, I counted over 150 of his fellow soldiers. I sat near the back and watched these good people who worked with the Airman and knew him well. I could imagine them in their aircraft with all their weaponry and firepower, and fully cognizant of their missions. Many of these work first hand in the death they deliver, yet in a Mass to honor their fallen comrade their love for Life stands out. I saw it in their tears and heard it in their words. I cannot imagine more proof, they fully understand what many at home do not. This war is about the terrorism slowly moving into each country, like a cancer to the world.

April 24, 2006

I came upon another ramp ceremony about to take place. Seems the Good Lord puts me in these places just at the right time; but I also noticed I didn't have my camera again. It feels as if He doesn't want me to take pictures of this. It was like being in the morgue a few months ago, and not being able to count the dozen or so names on the list. There are some things I am not allowed to do, so I have to engrave these images in my mind. If only the slate was made of granite, instead of sandstone.

There were at least 1500 soldiers already in formation. Several of the caskets had already arrived in armored carriers, in a slow solemn procession. These are the four Canadians who died last Saturday. Their remains will be

loaded into a C130 and taken back to their families. Canada has a news team in Kandahar I have seen from time to time, and they were on the flightline filming.

As the last armored carrier arrived, someone in the US formation gave a quick, sharp command and the US group went to attention. Right afterwards, the same took place for the Romanians, the French, British, Australians, and then the Canadians. The Canadian Chaplain is the Catholic priest I see at Mass every week; a very quiet and peaceful man. He spoke a few prayers and blessed the remains, but I was unable to hear what he said because of the distance and noise. I stood just off the flightline among a few other civilians and military personnel.

A bagpipe started playing a solemn melody as the four coffins were carried through the formation up the ramp of the plane. I watched several of the Canadian personnel taken out of the formation by others because of grief. One had to be carried after fainting. I watched the female newscaster turn and walk away from her crew so she could cry. Those with dignity will always be affected by scenes like this.

In the months I worked here, I had the honor of attending several of these Ramp Ceremonies. I always wonder what families they left behind. The hundred or so flags on this base are flown at half-mast for a week on report of a death. I even see personal flags from individual's tents, honoring heroes they did not know.

Everywhere on camp, you will find flags of many countries. Along with all sizes of 'Old Glory' you can see the 'Union Jack' of Britain, the Canadian flag, the Australian flag, French, Romanian and Dutch. The Texas flag is prominent as well as several other states' flags. The flag of any nation is a representation of it. Whether on a personal home, business, military installation, the peak of a mountain, the surface of the moon, or a grave; the purpose is the same. That country is represented there.

When the American flag is set at half mast, it is first raised to the top and then lowered to half-mast. No one can bring America to its knees; but **we** as a nation will bend a knee to honor our heroes, who made it possible for this country to remain the most powerful and thus the freest nation on Earth.

*Not only are we its people, **we are** America.*

Who would you deem a hero? The big soldier stumbling under the weight, coming in from a dangerous FOB? I witnessed a soldier at the camp hospital carrying a little Afghan boy with head and leg wounds out to the latrine several times a day to relieve himself. Perhaps you see that as a menial task. Is he a hero? Ask the little one. I met an Afghan-American who fled to America as a child during the Russian-Afghan war, and returned home to help rebuild the country of his heritage, and to put many of the local people back to work. Hero?

I know of a woman who helped write the part of the Afghanistan constitution concerning women's rights. How about the Afghan women who have the audacity to run for public offices? I met SF medics who take time to treat the locals who come to them for help; at times caring for young girls physically and sexually abused because of the Muslim's treatment of women. What about the people who give their time and talents to help lift the soldier's spirit? Would you see my father a hero, who simply did what he had to do because it was the right thing to do?

If you were to ask those people if they are heroes, what do you think they will say?

The dictionary defines a hero as:

A man admired for his achievements and noble qualities. One who shows great courage.

I walked among those who that defines. I was blessed to know these people and be a part of their task. Yet these are just the heroes of *this* part of the War on Terrorism. The world is filled with them. At any one time, heroes walk among us and never display their gift to us. Most will not see themselves as such and many others pass away leaving only a memory; and are never known for the good they do except by the Almighty Creator. Those who build statues to themselves, have their rewards.

*We live in a heroic age, Andrew Carnegie wrote in the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission's founding Deed of Trust in 1904. *Not seldom are we thrilled by deeds of heroism where men or women are injured or lose their lives in attempting to preserve or rescue their fellows, such the heroes of civilization.**

Yet it is the quiet heroes of this world who truly sustain humanity. Leo Tolstoy once commented, *"A political party has never accomplished anything for humanity. Individuals and geniuses have been the pioneers of every reform and of progress."* I've found this to be so. Any corporation, religion or government who performs tasks of goodwill for others, does so at the human level; and that

is where you find the heroes. I find it difficult to imagine a world without them, for it is impossible. No government, no kingdom or religion, can keep heroes from existing. They will exist because of their very nature. They choose to light a candle, than curse the darkness.

This is something I've had on my mind for years; who are the heroes in Life? When I chose to write about this it became an obsession. I would find myself in the dining facilities watching people, almost reading their minds. One particular night while attending Mass, it flooded my mind to the point of tears. I tried to think of something else but it kept coming back over and over; I was never so glad for Mass to end that evening. If I have found the answer, I do not know. I still find myself in search of heroes; still watching and listening among those I walk with, those who are lighting the candles. I find myself looking in the eyes I see and listening to the silence of others. Silence does not necessarily mean, of no words; for it is in the stillness of people do you find the un-sung heroes. I feel, only after my life here is complete, will I know who they are.

Christmas, 2005

There is a man who works for KBR, who looks like Santa Claus. He has the full white beard, round pudgy cheeks, bulbous nose and a big belly that shakes like a bowl full of jelly when he laughs. ... or however that poem goes. But the military borrowed him for a day; putting him in a Santa suit and flying him around to the FOBs to help spread a bit of Christmas cheer to those in the field. Imagine a Black Hawk chopper coming in with a heavily armed Apache following. And when it lands, some big guy in a bright red suit, contrasting the dull green of the chopper crawls out.

I went to Mass last night at 8pm. We were warned last week that this Mass would take an hour and a half to two hours, because there were going to be some baptisms and confirmations.

At the beginning of Mass, the priest (a Canadian) stated, this night belongs to God, so put your watches away. Usually there are 10 to about 25 people at Saturday Mass. I estimated there were about 150. Many faces I have not seen before. The Gospel was read in four different languages, Spanish, Dutch, French and English. That was the reading of the Birth of Christ, and hearing it in the different languages reminded me how widespread our Faith is.



And there I was last night, being told of the Birth, 2000 years later, while in a war devastated Muslim country, with its infectious dust, lethal snakes and the locals who search your soul through your eyes; amidst the cold chill of the desert night and the jackals howling across the dunes; in a small wooden church built by the soldiers themselves, with their rifles and RPG launchers stacked under chairs and in the aisles. But

this night belonged to God, so all hats were removed and all heads bowed.

We witnessed two soldiers, one male and one female, become baptized. And then those two, with four others, received Confirmation. Again, in this country, away from loved ones and families; but still in the presence of God, on this night that belonged to Him.

Christmas, 2006

It would be just like God to make my last Mass in this country a dichotomy. I attended the service in what is called a clamshell. It is a big tent-like structure with the ends able to open up. It actually looks similar to a clamshell turned upside down. Not warm in the winter, so Wilms heaters burning jet fuel are ducted into it. At one end, is a stage for USO shows, etc.

I'm here in Bagram waiting to fly out to Dubai in a few days, then further home. Bagram is surrounded by snow-capped mountains, often enshrouded in the clouds. Where I was in Salerno, the clouds in the far distance had snow, but those nearby were pretty much barren, except for the occasional artillery fire upon them.

Yesterday afternoon, the partly cloudy skies became a dull cold grey. It started raining very lightly for a few hours, then turned to ice, just like the Texas Panhandle. Then the ice turned to light snow. By six in the evening, it was a constant snow, sometimes with large slushy flakes.

The walk to the Clamshell was about a 12-15 minute trek. Unlike Salerno and most other bases in Afghanistan, the walk is a concrete sidewalk. One of the many things I will forever cherish in the States are metal eating utensils and

smooth walkways. The area is well lit; again, unlike Salerno, where at night, the lights are out. Officially a `blackout camp'; no external lighting allowed other than small personal flashlights.

Inside the Clamshell several hundred folding chairs were set up. I would not be surprised if the number was closer to five or six hundred. I arrived about 30 minutes early just to sit and relax and listen to the music. I realized it was a wise choice. I would not have guessed there were enough soldiers in Bagram who attend a Catholic Mass that it would require this much seating; but there is.

I sat in the back so I could watch people, but I was also just plain tired and didn't want to sit in a crowded area. The small orchestra on the stage played Christmas music I did not recognize, but sounded like something you would hear in a small pre-war German village. The Wilms heaters were heard throughout the clamshell, and steady streams of water slid in from the edges of the clamshell at various points. The concrete floor was dirty, no doubt swept during setup but now covered with layers of wet and dried mud. About a third of the concrete was wet, and some chairs sat in puddles. What a strange place to have a Christmas Mass; almost as strange as giving birth in a stable.

I watched these soldiers enter the clamshell in the Holiday spirit. Wishing each other "Merry Christmas", shaking hands and kissing cheeks. Each removed their hats as they entered, with steam rising from those with shaved heads. Many times I marvel at the health of these soldiers and their peace of mind; in a country such as this in a time of war. Much unlike the objectors at home.

The Mass began in the usual Vigil Mass way, with everyone holding a small taper. Incense preceded the procession amid the roar of the heaters that seemed to muffle the music. Father Dan stated a soldier will be baptized, and then with three others will be Confirmed. Just like the last two years, it amazes me that some people have to come to the most degraded country in the world to find their faith. No, not so much amazes me, but brings to realization He is found in the most unlikely places. The soldier's wife and three children back home are not baptized.

I attended Mass last Saturday night, and Father Dan told us he had only witnessed two live-births in his career as a priest. One of them in an African country, its name I don't remember. As he watch the miracle unfold with the help of a mid-wife, he felt his legs grow weak. After the delivery he had to lay down on a gurney next to the little mother. She looked over at him and started laughing. She asked his name. Daniel. And then she stated, that will be my

son's name. He laughingly added, somewhere out there, is a child named after me. Then was quick to add, but *not* mine!

Tonight, Father Dan's sermon stated churches all over the world are reading aloud the same Gospel we read. The same one used in the FOBs where no priest will be because of the weather. The soldiers themselves will have a service to breathe the Gospel to life.

At the Baptism, the soldier, big and husky with shaved head and his sidearm strapped to his thigh, bowed his head over the baptistery as Father poured the holy water and stated the Words of Baptism. I could not keep from thinking how many people equate weapons with evil. The closest thing to evil in that service was the sound system. Just as Father was about to start the Baptism, horrendous feedback occurred. I thought of Satan hiding nearby. The system was simply turned off. Father Dan removed his microphone and spoke loud and clear. At that point, the Ceremony became more solemn. Instead of Father simply stating the Words, he announced them, like a messenger announcing a decree. ... as it should be.

The many times I attended Mass in that country, I always see irony in watching where I walk in church due to the weapons on the floor. Tonight, I saw the weapons as tools for the protection of things sacred. Unlike Islam that uses its religion for hatred and death, this is a religion of compassion and understanding. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a French Jesuit priest in World War One, stated, "By virtue of the Incarnation, nothing here below is profane for those who know how to see. On the contrary, everything is sacred." The soldiers of this War, who are fighting Islamic Terrorism, do not realize this is a religious war to preserve everything sacred. They know only they are fighting for what is right.

The last year, I ask God about me being there. In the preceding years, I can see where certain things foreshadowed me being placed there, so I knew He had a reason. Part of His response stated, I would stay there until He was ready for me to leave. Several months earlier, I saw the Educational Center in Salerno had some classes starting up. I checked out the course offering and decided on one for World Religions; something I was quite curious about. I signed up, paid an outrageous fee, and took the course. In the meantime, I decided it was time to leave at the end of the year, so I figured the Lord will let me go. It is a well known fact overseas, when it's time to leave these jobs, you will know for sure. I was ready to leave for sure.

I attended the classes, did well, learned what I wanted to learn and am satisfied. It seemed the timing was just right for going home. At the last class when I showed up, it turned out to just be a quick session to turn in any remaining papers and fill out some silly survey. Afterwards, ... that was it. I stepped out of the building into the darkness and felt a baffling sadness. As I walked back to my housing, I kept wondering why I felt this. It was almost a depression, yet not quite. Later that night I realized I was given my release to go home. It was a feeling unlike the solemnity of a service, or birth or death where something profound takes place. I had completed my task here and could now leave.

I went there for three reasons. To become debt-free; to live this and write about it; and to do something no matter how insignificant to aid the War on Terror. I had completed all three. I was not allowed to handle any firearms. No one would let me throw any bombs out the window. Couldn't pull any triggers or lob any grenades; but I did something to allow me to express what I saw on this War, and this Life. It's not unlike having to vote before you have a right to complain.

I looked into the eyes of many of the locals there, and most times saw very good people. Many simple and just curious. But I also saw hatred and its darkness in some of them. As a local contractor told me in Kandahar, all those people were Taliban at one time. They became such, because it was the thing to do. After the United States destroyed its government, most became just people again. With desires, fears and needs like us. It is those who continue to use the Islamic religion for an excuse to hate and kill that will make this war on-going. If we give the controls of our country to those who use it for themselves, we all lose. The only consolation we have is there will be a point when the Creator says, "Enough." And we will be given our release to go Home.

Dwaine Nolte