



### War is Hell

It was at the Ohio State Fair in 1880 that one of the most quoted statements on war was first uttered. Speaking was General William T. Sherman, you know him as the general who captured Atlanta during his march to the sea back in the days of the Civil War. These were the words he spoke to a group of military cadets who were graduating at the time and preparing for life in the armed forces of the United States.

'Cadets of the graduating class' – the students arose and saluted – Sherman then changed his greeting to simply saying 'Boys,' because like all young soldiers they WERE all just boys. He continued with this statement: 'I've been where you are now and I know just how you feel. It's entirely natural that there should beat in the breast of every one of you a hope and desire that someday you can use the skill you have acquired here.'

'Suppress it! You don't know the horrible aspects of war. I've been through two wars and I know. I've seen cities and homes in ashes. I've seen thousands of men lying on the ground, their dead faces looking up at the skies. I tell you, war is hell!'

Back in the 60's when I was growing up all of the boys played Army. We had been watching shows like "Combat!" and movies with John Wayne that glorified the life of a soldier. We thought war was cool. But we didn't know war at all, we only knew the version that Hollywood wanted us to know, the one where the good guys never get killed and no one ever bleeds after being shot or blown up. I remember clearly thinking how 'cool' it would be to be a soldier, to go out and look for and kill the enemy of my country. I thought it would be easy. I never once thought of the cost of war, only of the perceived glories of it all.

But that view of war is false, and that was the message Sherman was trying to get across to his group of graduates. War is not 'cool', war is not fun, it is not about running around shooting the enemy and laughing. War is Hell on earth, and there is no such thing as a small war. When men face men with the intention of killing each other there is nothing glorious about it, no matter which side you're on.

I've mentioned before in this column that I have a son, Army Specialist Christopher Herrera, who is serving right now in Iraq. He's stationed in Baghdad with the 26<sup>th</sup> Forward Support Battalion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division. His home away from home is known as "Camp Hope". Recently both of us learned the true meaning of Sherman's words. It was a Saturday and I was sending instant messages to Chris over the Internet when this message came across from my son, thousands of miles away: "One of my friends got killed." I was stunned. I wrote back, "What? What happened?" He responded, "One of my friends got killed yesterday. His name was Dustin Yancey. He was a private. He was in my company at Ft. Stewart and went out on missions all the time." I responded: "How did it happen?" Chris wrote back, "He was on patrol and got hit by an IED. (Improvised explosive device... we call them roadside bombs)" Chris continued, "There was a Captain who got killed too." I was stunned. I was completely at a loss for words and knew in that instant, perhaps for the first time in my life, what Sherman meant when he said "War is Hell!" There was only one word I could think of to respond to Chris.

"Damn!"

I did not know Army Private Dustin Yancey, nor Army Captain James Gurbisz who was killed along with Pvt. Yancey but I cried that day for both of them and for my son who in one fell swoop had lost the optimistic outlook that defines one's youth. Never again would Chris, nor I, look at war as something that other people worry about. Never again would war be exciting or fun. War would forever forward be nothing short of Hell on earth. War would be the force that took from us Private Yancey, quick with a joke, loved by many, missed by all at Camp Hope. War would be the evil force that snatched Captain James Gurbisz from his family and from his friends.

I asked Chris about Yancey. He responded, "He was a quiet guy, but always had jokes. You would never think of him as ending up KIA." That's Killed in Action for those who do not know. That's the problem with war and the soldiers who fight it. None of them ever imagine THEY might end up KIA. Their parents don't imagine such horror, their friends don't imagine it. We sugar coat war too much and stories like this need to be told to remind people that Sherman knew what he was talking about when, more than 100 years ago, he warned military cadets "War is Hell!"

Chris and Yancey, as he was known by his fellow soldiers, were friends for about two years. Actually, from the time Chris was first ordered to Ft. Stewart, Georgia with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division. They joked together. They played together. They were in the same company at Ft. Stewart and grew to know each other as only soldiers can. Neither could possibly imagine their all-too-short friendship would last only those two years because one of them would pay the ultimate sacrifice for freedom. I close this month with a request that you pray for the families of Pfc. Dustin Yancey and Capt. James Gurbisz. I know that God has already prepared a special place for the souls of these men and others like them who gave up their lives not for earthly rewards, but to make it possible for others, most often complete strangers, to live in freedom and to control their own destiny.

### **Nighttime in Baghdad**

This month I want to tell you about nighttime in Baghdad, and why it has such a special meaning to me and to hundreds of thousands of people across the United States. My subject deals with every race, ethnic group and religion in this wonderful country of ours.

Anyone who has been a regular listener knows that my youngest son, Chris, is a Specialist in the United States Army and that he is currently stationed at Camp Hope in Central Baghdad. His decision to serve his country before college is a source of great pride and great agony for me, my wife Jayme and my oldest son Joseph. But as any parent of a soldier can tell you along with the pride, fear and uncertainty comes a great deal of guilt. Allow me to relate some recent events to explain what I mean about guilt.

It was on August 3<sup>rd</sup> that we learned of the horrific attack on U.S. Marine forces in western Iraq that killed 14 of America's finest fighting men. As I read that story, I felt the familiar guilt I feel whenever I read about such disasters in the desert. Guilt that I was feeling relief that the event happened far from Baghdad and could not possibly involve my son, Chris. Then, on August 4<sup>th</sup>, the very next day, I was in for a day of agony that ended with a huge guilt trip.

There is a curse to being in the news business. The curse is knowledge. Sometimes too much can be a very bad thing. Such was the case on August 4<sup>th</sup>. Chris had recently completed a mid-tour leave home and was heading back to his Forward Operating Base. I knew on that day that he was to take a convoy from FOB Rustimyah, Iraq, in eastern Baghdad to Camp Hope in Central Baghdad. I hate it any time Chris is in a convoy because I know how vulnerable they can be. Those days I read the wire and hope I don't see anything scary. But on August 4<sup>th</sup> I saw something very scary indeed. The story concerned the deaths of three American soldiers in Baghdad, hit by a roadside bomb in their convoy. They were all members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, just like Chris. On reading the news I knew then that I was in for several hours of agony at best.

On such days, and there are far too many of them not only for me but for the parents and loved ones of all soldiers, one finds oneself constantly on edge, ready to pounce on anyone for the slightest thing. You also find yourself saying a lot of prayers and getting to know the man upstairs on a first name basis. On most of those days you also find yourself ridden with guilt. Knowing full well that someone somewhere had lost a loved one I still prayed it was NOT my Chris. And when, at the end of the day, I was finally able to establish contact with him and knew he had made it to Camp Hope safely the relief I felt was equal only to the guilt.

Somewhere in this country August 4<sup>th</sup> is a day of great sadness for at least 3 families. Just as August 3<sup>rd</sup> is a day of great sadness for the families of those 14 U.S. Marines. I will not long remember those particular days, but surely as the families of the fallen soldiers will remember them. What I will never forget though, for as long as I live, is the guilt I felt at the relief that swept over me when I learned that Chris was okay for another day. Rejoicing even though I knew full well that for 3 families who had also been on edge August 4<sup>th</sup> ended with a visit from an Army officer in dress uniform and a chaplain. Their worst nightmares realized.

Now let me tell you about nighttime in Baghdad. It is the only time, you see, when I do not struggle with fear, agony or guilt. Why? Because I know that during the nighttime my son is safe in his bunk at Camp Hope, protected by a huge security force that is constantly on the alert. He turns in around 9 pm Baghdad time and wakes up at 5:30 the next morning. That's noon until about 8:30 pm in Wisconsin. Those are my quiet hours, and even then they remain quiet only when I talk with him before he turns in so that I know he's safe. It's a luxury most parents of soldiers do not enjoy and I relish it!

If you can read this and not pause right here to say a prayer for all of our men and women in uniform then you will never understand the meaning of fear, agony or guilt. They are emotions I wish I did not understand as fully as I understand them today.

### **What Immigration Reform?**

Immigration reform is, predictably, stalled on Capitol Hill. Anyone who delves even mildly into politics could have predicted this at the beginning of what has been a long, hot summer. The surprise, however, is what is taking place at the local level. Immigration reform may not be a national reality, but it is rapidly becoming a local nightmare for thousands of Latinos, legal and illegal.

While the feds have dragged their feet on the issue, a number of local communities have moved quickly to adopt laws that make it extremely tough on anyone who might be considered an illegal immigrant, whether they are legal or not. Here are a couple of cases in point:

In Hazelton, Pennsylvania the city has adopted a new ordinance that requires all tenants to obtain an occupancy permit, fines landlords one thousand dollars for renting to illegal immigrants, revokes the business permits of employers who hire the undocumented and denies these same businesses all city contracts or grants for a period not to exceed ten years.

Hazelton is not alone. Similar ordinances are either on the books or under consideration in a handful of other towns and cities across the country. In every case the reason for local action is the same: The government is not doing enough, as far as local leaders are concerned, to stop the flood of illegal immigrants into the United States. It's a case of literally taking the law into one's own hands, but on the civic level instead of the individual level.

Opponents of these new regulations and restrictions say it is sheer madness to have every local jurisdiction enacting laws that will govern the conditions under which illegal immigrants will live. But without a clear lead from Washington that is exactly what is happening now and what will happen with even greater frequency in the future.

Let's face it. Our national leaders are completely rudderless when it comes to the issue of illegal immigration. They ALL give it plenty of lip service, but when it comes time to actually VOTE on something, well, that's going on the record, isn't it? This has been proven time and time again not only this summer but through the decades. If the issue is tough, you can bet there will be lots of Congressional heads buried in the sand with fingers pointing to the next legislator down the line. This explains why there is still no national policy to deal with a very real problem.

I've said it before, but it bears repeating. We simply cannot jail millions of illegal immigrants. Immigration reform, if it ever makes it through Congress must take into consideration ways to slow or stop the flow of illegal immigrants without imposing an even larger burden on the American taxpayer.

Focusing ONLY on the immigrant is a losing proposition from the start because it ignores the fact that were it not for the employers who are willing to offer jobs to undocumented workers there would be no illegal immigrant problem. The truth about the typical undocumented worker is he or she is doing nothing more than trying to better their own lives or the lives of their family. As long as there is an employer willing to make that possible, there will be illegal immigrants. There is nothing new about men and women crossing borders to make a better life for themselves or their loved ones. It is a human trait that directly led to the very founding of this country!

Until the law gets tough, very tough on the employers who hire illegals the message being sent is this: If you can just get here, you will be rewarded with a better life! That is a powerful message. If you doubt its power consider for a moment the hundreds if not thousands of Cubans who have died trying to cross the Straits of Florida in makeshift rafts, or even those who died trying to make their way across the Berlin Wall during the cold war.

Strengthen the borders and severely penalize the businesses that break the law! THAT is the kind of immigration reform that will work. Then work with those undocumented workers who are already here to help them become legal, tax-paying residents. Will it happen? This is an election year, are you kidding? There's no way Congress will have the guts to penalize employers who also happen to kick millions of dollars into campaign funds. Oh there may yet be immigration reform before all is said and done but if it comes to be I predict it will deal harshly only with the immigrant who wants nothing more than to improve his life, and do little or nothing to the employers who lure him across the border.

I hope I'm wrong.

### **The Most Dangerous Job**

That's what I've always heard about the task of removing and replacing the front dampers (shocks) in a Rolls-Royce or Bentley from the Shadow through the Spirit/Spur series so it was with great fear that I noticed some time ago a large puddle of oil directly under my right front shock. Maybe if I just ignored it, I thought, it would go away. That didn't work. With thoughts of potential cost tormenting my brain I called a fellow RROC member who also happens to own a dealership. "Relax" he told me, "Most of the work is being done by the springs, as long as your ride is okay you can let it slide!" I was somewhat heartened by the words but deep inside I knew the car was not right. I tried ignoring the problem, but could not get past the knowledge that something was amiss. But dare I, a mere mortal, attempt to deal with those deadly springs?? After all, that is the most dangerous job you can do, right?

About a full year of worry later, I spotted an ad on EBay: "Rolls-Royce Tool for Front Suspension Repair". The price was right at about a third of factory cost and I was assured the tool, RH8809 had only been used three times so I bought it. Days later I spotted an ad for Boge shocks at a very reasonable price, but they would come from Beirut, Lebanon! The feedback on the seller was quite good so I bit. Now I had the tool and the shocks (which by the way turned up even cheaper on EBay from a California source the very week I finished the job!) All I needed was warm weather and my mechanically-minded son to help me tackle what everyone warned me was the most dangerous job you can do on a PMC!

The warm weather finally arrived in Milwaukee in mid-March. My son was home and all was seemingly well. I eagerly grabbed the dampers and the tool and began preparing to do the job with my son at my side (and doing most of the actual work!) when suddenly I noticed something was missing! With my car, a 1988 Silver Spur, I would need adapter plate RH12053! I was crushed! I had gotten up the nerve to try the job only to be dashed at the last moment. I was ready to give up, sell the tool and the dampers and live with a bad suspension.

It was my son who said, "Let's make our own adapter!" I figured I'd gone this far, so why not give it one more try. We found a nice, round bit of hardened steel about a quarter inch thick with the necessary hole in the middle. We drilled 4 holes in it to accept the steels rods that are part of tool RH8809 then used a round file to make the holes oval in shape to allow for wiggle room. (see pictures) This is NOT by the book but I was convinced because of the strength of the steel that it would work. But I was still very, very scared and told my son the project was off at the first sign that ANYTHING was going wrong.

With visions of a steel spring tearing through the metal plate we both proceeded with supreme care. Chris, my son, had already announced that after the tool was in place, we would loosen the mounting bolts on the engine side of the upper spring plate first. That way, he explained, if the spring broke through no one would be leaning over the plate when it happened. That's just one example of how concerned we were about what seemed to us to be the very real possibility that the spring would win the day and ruin a perfectly good project. We even outlined an emergency plan we would follow should the spring prove more powerful than the steel plate. We were ready for any eventuality because we knew this was the most dangerous job! As it turned out it was as easy as slicing bread! The entire job was very straightforward and the only problem we had was with the damper ball joint which, as you will see, refused to budge.

We started by attaching the bottom support plate halves of the retention tool around the lower section of the damper. This job MUST be done while the weight of the car is still resting on a ramp or on the ground. Without that weight there is no way to get the support plate around the engine side of the damper, it is blocked by control arms and other metal. Once the support plate was in place and securely fastened, we removed the nuts and washers from the top of the damper and then carefully threaded the retaining tools' steel shafts through our make-shift adapter plate and down to the support plate. They threaded right in with no problem at all. Chris stayed under the car to guide the rods to the holes and I did the turning up top. Once all four were in place we fit the nuts, washers and thrust race and bearings to the rods and began to tighten them. I expected we'd hit a point where it would be obvious that we had reached the right tightness, but in fact we were actually able to further compress the spring using nothing more than hand power! (As long as the weight of the car was helping us! Once the retention tool carried the full spring load when the car was jacked up we could not do this) This amazed me and suddenly I was no longer worried about the spring shooting through our little invention! We tightened things down, pulling the spring another inch or so tighter and only then raised the car off the ground and onto jack stands.

With the wheel removed for easy access one could see the compressed spring and the damper, still showing obvious signs of the leak that developed so long ago! The book talks about releasing the bottom of the damper from the damper ball joint assembly but we could not get it to budge! We spent 30 minutes or more working to release it when we decided to just lift the tower up and see what happened. What happened actually made the job easier! The entire assembly lifted off, leaving the damper behind! Normally you would pull the assembly with damper still inside off, then work to remove the damper, but we ended up with a spring that still had all the damper surrounding parts attached...but no damper. It was very simple to insert the new damper through the spring, the convoluted dust cover, the collar and the spring support plate all of which remained where they belong, inside the spring!

We still had the frozen damper to deal with and since we did not have a small puller to do the job Chris came up with an idea: we used a second hydraulic jack placed under the ball joint assembly (after removing the cotter pin and loosening the castellated nut that secured the damper ball pin assembly to the lower triangle levers) and used it to pop the ball joint assembly off of the levers. It was a matter of jacking the control arms up until they hit the rubber stop then one more pump and "POP" the assembly came apart as it should. We then pulled everything out through the tower and took it to a vice. Since we had also tried to separate just the damper from the ball joint earlier, we knew that it, too, was also frozen. After placing the damper in the vice, we used a small blowtorch to heat the metal collar where the damper screws into the ball joint and at the first attempt we were able to pop it loose and unscrew it with ease. I know you're not supposed to heat a damper or put it in a vice, but this one was heading for the garbage anyway and we were very careful to heat only metal and avoid doing any damage to the rubber on the ball joint assembly.

Once that was free it was a very quick job to attach the new damper to the ball joint and to slide it into the tower and then to put everything back in the car. It had taken us 2 and a half hours to pull everything apart, mostly because of fear, but it took only 30 minutes to put it all back together! In retrospect I'm certain this job can be done in under two hours with the proper tools and the knowledge we now have. In fact, when the weather gets warm again, we plan to do the left front assembly!

I learned several important lessons with this job:

1. Respect but don't fear the load in the spring, with the proper tools it can and will be under control at all times. This IS a dangerous job without the proper tools but with them it's very easy to accomplish. (Our club has the tools!)
2. You must have the spring under load to attach the support plate halves. It simply cannot be done if the spring is not under load! Don't lift the car until the tool is completely attached and holding the spring in place.
3. You can actually speed things up by loosening but not detaching the damper ball joint assembly from the lower triangle levers! Pull the tower out with the spring, but leave the damper behind. The damper will come out with the ball joint assembly all in one piece allowing you to remove the ball joint from the damper on a work bench. You can also attach it to the new damper on the bench.
4. When you have everything reassembled, make sure you leave at least one of the retaining tool rods loosely in place so you can more easily unscrew the bolts that hold the support plate halves together. Once separated remove your final retaining rod.

In summary, with the help of my son I have managed to overcome not only a bad suspension but also my fear of "the most dangerous job you can do on a Rolls-Royce"! I have learned that even a dangerous job is simple and safe when you have the proper tools.