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The Heroes of Carlisle

Co-authored by Edgar Allan Coe and Vincent Van Goldby

Be inspired by this story about a band of retired CIA employees, committed to the future of America and willing to risk their social security and pensions to put service before self in their effort to rescue an absent-minded Pittsburgh planned giving officer in an effort save philanthropy and all that has contributed to making America great.

- Given four stars by the French Grammatical Society
- Rated “Number One Reading” by the Places Rated Almanac
- Given a “Thumbs-Up” by the Bosler Memorial Library
- Voted “Most Insightful Fiction” by the Western PA School for Blind Children
- Moved me to tears – Oliver Onion, Pittsburgh Pirates Baseball Club
- Amazing...Unbelievable – Jack Miller, Pittsburgh Planned Giving Council

Disclaimer: This is a fictitious tale about not so fictitious people, some of whose names have been changed to protect the innocent and not so innocent. Any misrepresentation of politicians, past or president (pun intended), is purely coincidental (or not). Like politics, double-speak may be employed to confuse the reader.

Dedication:



This book is dedicated to Bengie, a beautiful dog committed to keeping the veterinary profession profitable. Loved by all who know him, Bengie was a CIA Drug Sniffer Enforcement Agent assigned to Alex Hensel. When the government announced that its healthcare program was not going to the dogs, Bengie was not eligible to participate (his pre-existing condition didn't help either). Out of respect for her long-time associate, Agent Hensel stepped forward to underwrite all of Bengie's medical costs, forcing Agent Hensel to use her own savings to assure the health of her most trusted friend. Bengie doubles as a foot-warmer during the cold Carlisle winters.

THE HEROES OF CARLISLE

For years, the CIA had wrestled with the question of where to locate their classified retired agents, some of whom had been involved in the most clandestine assignments in history from the Bay of Pigs Invasion and Kennedy assassination to bringing down the Berlin Wall. These people had enough dirt to fill a volcano.

They weren't your average run of the mill spies. One could speak five languages and do verb conjugations and noun declensions at a moment's notice. Another had more degrees than a thermometer and was still acquiring doctorates as an octogenarian. Yet another, a computer virus guru, was still under contract with the government to develop a way to infect computers simply by spamming bad jokes, obscene pictures and serious religious images.

While this was indeed a motley crew, today's CIA leadership didn't have much respect for "the old timers" given that their average age was 92. Even so, they couldn't risk having them exist without CIA control and oversight. It was for that reason that in 1975 the CIA created an agent retirement community next to the U. S. War College in Carlisle Pennsylvania where residents received three meals a day and were exposed to various forms of entertainment from shopping trips to TV Golf. For a good while, the former agents enjoyed their controlled independence without realizing it was a mere ploy to assure that national secrets remained secrets and former agents remained former.



After the 2008 presidential election, the CIA conceived a plot at the Administration's urging to gradually bring about the end of charitable organizations across America. With the full support of the president and his cabinet, the CIA was charged with developing strategies to do away with philanthropy in a way similar to boiling a frog. Laws would be changed to end tax deductions for charitable gifts, phone solicitations would be limited to weekdays during soap operas, and charities would be prohibited from lobbying

for their missions. Federal funding would be permitted only for non-profit hospitals that performed government-approved procedures; and colleges and universities would not be given access to subsidized scholarships unless 85% of their faculty had graduated during the sixties or attended USC Berkeley.

The government correctly surmised that if this policy could be enacted with few objections, the charitable core of our country would slowly erode and only the government would be positioned to step into the void using tax dollars to address the needs that it deemed in the best interest of all. Not only would this promote a government agenda, but also the extreme dependence on government funding would assure politicians job security in the same way that easements assure the preservation of historic buildings and landscapes.

While brilliant in theory, the plan had one major flaw. The CIA forgot that the most generous and conscientious people in the country were those retired CIA agents living at LeTort Arms next to the War College. While these retirees were on a fixed income and, in theory, the least likely to oppose such a plan, they were also the people who had a deep appreciation for the cost of freedom and an understanding of the role non-profit institutions play in promoting the common good.

As the plan began to be implemented, charities across the nation were being impacted. Blind schools could not see an end to the decline in giving. Deaf schools were hearing no outcry from their elected officials and churches and synagogues were losing faith in the system; food banks could no longer stomach the lack of interest of public officials; and colleges and universities had no answers for the decline in giving.



Miles Jackson

Just when most had lost hope for America as we once knew it, several retired agents sitting on their patio at LeTort Arms overheard a visiting CIA officer mention to a War College general that Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation Planned-Giving Officer Miles Jackson was arranging a trip to Carlisle. Intelligence indicated that Jackson was the only threat to their well-conceived plan since his BA was in BS, and his passion was based on the DeTocqueville concept of philanthropy.

Moreover, the War College was obtaining land for military truck transports and a place to bury radioactive waste. Jackson now represented the only organization with enough guts to obtain preservation easements on the farms and historic buildings that the Pentagon had targeted for that purpose. The white knight was the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation and the CIA knew that Jackson's appearance now could only cause problems for the CIA and the Administration.

Jackson's visit was in response to learning that two of his donors, Mr. and Mrs. G. G. Gooch and their family, began developing strange mutations at their Carlisle home built adjacent to a lot owned by the War College. After Mrs. Gooch began to glow in the dark and Mr. Gooch's jaws began to swell and after their infant developed a protruded nose, and their German Shepherd began looking like a French Poodle, it was then that Jackson and Landmarks decided to investigate if the government would not. Once completed, they planned to take their findings to the Carlisle Health Department and point the finger where they suspected the problem originated: WITH THE FEDS!



Gooch Pooch



Mr. Gucci G. Gooch



Ms. Esther Gooch



Baby Gooch

TERROR IN THE WINGS

The eavesdropping soon turned shocking when two of the retirees who were also friends of Jackson, Harry Goldby (Popeye from the French Connection) and Russ Coe, heard the military men hatch a plot to kidnap Jackson, hide him at the War College, then hold him until Landmarks President Arthur Ziegler agreed to dissolve his charitable organization. If Ziegler didn't agree in one week, Jackson would be toast.



Harry Goldby (Popeye from the French Connection)

Goldby and Coe were beside themselves. Both men knew that Ziegler would sacrifice Jackson rather than give in to terrorists, especially where preservation was concerned. Coe, the man for whom the term “covert” activity is named, vowed to mobilize all of the retirees and use their years of wisdom to conceive a plan to rescue Jackson and uncover the plot to eliminate charities from the face of America. When Coe committed, he was committed (or at least should have been).



“Miles Jackson will be happy to die for our organization. He cares that much!”

-- Arthur Ziegler



“I won’t take this lying down. We have to do something to save him, and we will.”

-- Russ Coe

First Coe called the complex manager. Affectionately referred to by the retirees as Alex the Great, Hensel was the youngest agent at Le Tort. During the nineties, she had handled security at the United Nations and monitored the extra curricular activities of U.S. politicians. As a matter of fact, the information she obtained during that assignment was instrumental in the CIA being able to blackmail more than 70% of the members of the House and Senate to support the Administration’s **plan to end philanthropy and whittle away morality in America**. When Hensel discovered the conspiracy-she tried to stop it, but was silenced by a reassignment to LeTort and a threatened loss of her pension and social security benefits if she let the cat out of the bag. But being a dog-type person, she quietly continued to support Animal Friends, the Humane Society and Pets Without Parents. Now, with the kidnapping of Jackson, she was more committed than ever to end the conspiracy and do what she could to bring justice to those who would promote an end to individual generosity and spirituality in America.

The first thing Hensel did was to call George Markel. He and his wife Carol had built the CIA's undercover surveillance program in the fifties and Alex knew that if anyone could get into the War College to rescue Jackson, it would be Markel.



Alex Hensel

The Markels had worked together in Bethlehem in December of 1985 where, by using unique disguises, they were able to gather information that led to the capture of terrorists who had planned to bomb the Church of the Nativity. George and Carol were alarmed to learn that Jackson, the one man committed to all that was good about America, was in serious danger. So George quickly put a plan into action that would have made the younger CIA agents green with envy. But like all good plans, he needed to obtain financing (and lots of it) to assure the plan's success.



George and Carol Markel on assignment in Bethlehem

George knew that Goldby and Coe were owed a lot of favors for the many kind deeds they had done over the years for people in need. Coe had especially good contacts in the banking industry and, within two hours, had arranged a sidewalk meeting with M&T Bank VP Jane Burke. He convinced her that rescuing Jackson was not only the right thing to do, but also the best thing to do from a business standpoint. After all, by exposing the plan to do away with philanthropy, M&T Bank would be in the best position to manage the gift annuity accounts that would result from the resurgence of philanthropy. Burke agreed, and gave Coe a \$10 million unsecured line of credit to underwrite the cost of Jackson's rescue and to expose the Administration's plan to do away with philanthropy.



Bank VP Jane Burke commits to handle financing for Coe and Goldby's operation.

As coincidence would have it, long-time friend and retired agent Jay Peep was eating at the Fairground Café with his wife, Bo. When Coe and Goldby told the couple about the Jackson kidnapping, they wanted in on the rescue...and as it happened, they were scheduled to move into LeTort the next day, giving them total anonymity. It couldn't have worked out better.



Pittsburgh Amy with Coe and Goldby making plans to establish a base of operation for the LeTort rescue team.

Once financing was in place, the team needed a remote, yet public place to do their planning away from the watchful eye of the CIA oversight officers at the War College.

Coe and Goldby were known all over Carlisle and had many restaurant connections since they had used these businesses to launder some of the slush funds from their working days. Next stop, the Fairground Café where they hooked up with Pittsburgh Amy.

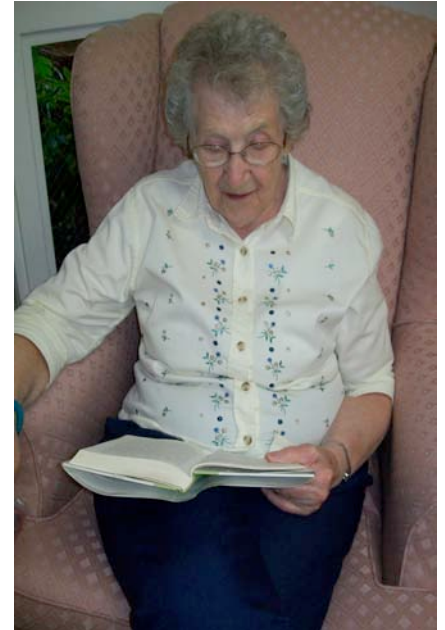
“P.A.” as she liked to be called, had once helped Goldby uncover a Mafia conspiracy to replace Heinz Ketchup with a generic brand. When she learned that a Pittsburgher was in trouble, she made the restaurant available to the LeTort rescue team.

The pieces were now falling into place. The LeTort Team had the money, the “front” location and access to some of the greatest CIA agents of all time. Now they needed a plan.

Goldby knew that his brightest friends were currently reading books and newspapers to find typographical errors and improper verb usages. If he could get their advice and merge it with the expertise of the LeTort retirees, Goldby knew that they could come up with a plan that would result in a Jackson rescue and perhaps restore philanthropy to its place of prominence in America. So he called them in for consultation.



Jay and Bo Peep



It wasn't long before they had hatched the idea to smuggle a team of retirees into the War College under the guise of a retiree tour. Old people tour anything, anywhere, especially if a free meal is included. What cover! Once inside the gates, they could use their perceived ineptness to stymie the CIA security folks, thoroughly inspect the property and hopefully locate and safely extract Jackson. No sweat. They had done it hundreds of times in their working years and now they had the element of surprise on their side.



LeTort retirees were enthusiastic in volunteering for the dangerous mission of entering the War College to risk their lives in an effort to rescue Miles Jackson and thwart the CIA's plan to eliminate philanthropy and spirituality in America. The future of America was in the hands of these heroes.

Goldby, Coe and the Markels had only one fear. Given the dangerous nature of the mission, would any of the LeTort retirees be willing to risk their lives for a fundraiser, and one from Pittsburgh to boot!

It didn't take long to get the answer. Using some of the money fronted by Burke, a free dinner was hosted at the Fairground Café. Once there, the group was made aware of the problem and a vote was taken. It was unanimous. Pittsburgh may not be Carlisle, and Jackson was a fund-raiser, but with philanthropy and Jackson, the CIA would give the keys to the country to the government, and the days of \$800 hammers had to be put in the past.

They recognized that they had run the good race and fought the good fight. If this country weren't worth dying for, it wouldn't be worth living for. So everyone agreed that the next day they would ride the bus through the War College gates, find Jackson, no matter what the sacrifice.

Nobody slept well that night. But then after age 80, nobody sleeps well any night. At 6:45 a.m., the rescue team began loading supplies on the bus. Coe spent extra time looking for weapons he used in WWII, but they were rusty and so was he.

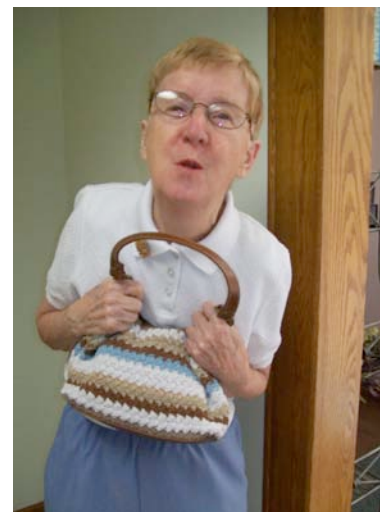




Weapons of all types were taken on the bus...from poison to knives, to grenades to wild animals. Everyone was ready. It was just a case of doing it or getting off the pot.



As the bus entered the facility, the War College welcoming officer warmly greeted the masquerading tour group...so far, so good. There was one minor scuffle when Peggy Pennywatcher refused to pay the admission fee since they would not give her a senior citizen discount. After a brief discussion, the War College waved everyone's entrance fee out of respect for their past CIA service. At that point, the group split up and agreed to report back to the main entrance by noon.



Peggy Pennywatcher



The team began looking everywhere...behind columns, behind pictures, even in the ladies room. No Jackson.



Suddenly, a scuffle broke out. Alma, the real brains behind the operation, had stumbled upon a pit where Jackson was being kept bound and gagged. Only Alma had been smart enough to figure that where else would you keep a Pittsburgher except in a pit?

Unfortunately, being smart is not equated with being quiet. When Alma knocked over a lamp in her rush to get to the door, Jackson's guard was alerted and began to choke Alma. It was an ugly sight, until one of the retired agents realized from experience that anyone could be bought, and it wouldn't take too much to bribe a guard to release a fund-raiser.



As it turned out, a chocolate mint cookie was all that was needed to get Jackson released. As the duct tape was removed from his mouth, Jackson's rescuers began to have second thoughts about the rescue. Markel thought about shooting himself, but had forgotten both his gun and his bullets.



Immediately, Jackson began asking his rescuers to support the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation's efforts to preserve farms and buildings in Cumberland County. He encouraged everyone to write their legislators about the Charitable IRA Rollover, faith-based initiatives and other topics upon which his passion was fueled. They could only look down from above, throw their hands up and wonder if the medicine was more painful than the disease.



While the LeTort rescuers were having second thoughts, Pittsburgh was jubilant. Word had been leaked through a friendly CIA agent that the CIA retirees had foiled the government plot to eliminate God and philanthropy from the national scene. The mint immediately announced that the words *“In God We Trust”* would now be prominently displayed on every piece of currency. Legislation putting onerous rules on non-profits would be repealed and Americans could return to supporting those charities whose missions matched their interests.



As the last rescuer left the War College, it was announced that the entire LeTort Community would be honored in Pittsburgh with a parade for saving Jackson and the foundation on which this country was built.

Ah, it was nice to be appreciated again. Nice to make a difference. God Bless America!



On Saturday, July 4, 2009, 375,000 Pittsburghers turned out to show their appreciation for the Carlisle heroes who rescued Miles Jackson and restored philanthropy to its rightful place in this country. In honoring the heroes, Jackson said:

“They live by the philosophy of one: I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And what I can do, I ought to do. And what I ought to do, by the grace of God, I will do. I will do more than belong...I will participate. I will do more than care...I will help. I will do more than believe...I will practice. I will do more than be fair...I will be kind. I will do more than dream...I will work. I will do more than teach...I will inspire. I will do more than earn...I will enrich. I will do more than give...I will serve. I will do more than live...I will grow. I will do more than talk...I will act. I will be more than good...I will be good for something.”