

FACING DEATH: A GREEN BERET'S PERSPECTIVE

by Thomas Booth

BROTHERS, I REALIZE THAT WE ARE JUST NOT WIRED THE SAME AS EVERYONE ELSE. I LOOKED UP THE PHASES OF DYING AND HERE THEY ARE FOR CIVILIANS: DENIAL, ANGER, BARGAINING, DEPRESSION AND ACCEPTANCE. THIS IS ALL GREEK TO ME. NOT APPLICABLE OR EVEN UNDERSTANDABLE. I THINK ALL OF US ACCEPTED YEARS AGO DURING OUR A-TEAM TIME THAT THOUGH NONE US WANTS TO DIE, WE'RE ALSO NOT AFRAID TO DIE. IT IS THE CONTRACT WE MUST MAKE WITHIN OURSELVES TO BE A GREEN BERET. WE JUST VIEW DEATH AS SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS EVENTUALLY, NOW OR LATER DOESN'T REALLY MATTER TO US.

Here is one SF Brother's Phases of Dying:

Not looking good for me, but that's just more of the suck, and we all know it well. Nothing new here. If it happens, we have to plan for it.

If it doesn't happen, then God awarded me some bonus time.

You realize what an amazing life you have led, and all the amazing people and Brothers you know and love. It occurs to you that you have had a heck of run, a run most men wish they might have had. You really did it. No crap, No bull. You climbed to that mountaintop. You realize what you must stand for. You are a Green Beret, and you will always be one. So you know you must uphold that standard, especially now with death in your face. You must go at this straight on. We are all blunt, naturally. We say what we think and get bored with nonsense, fast. "Cut to the chase" might as well be another SF motto. If I am going to die, then I'm not playing games with that. Time for me to take it on, to face it with strength, courage and honor. One of my jobs is to uplift those friends and family who might feel pain at my loss. I must get them to understand that I'm okay with it, that I love them back, but most of all that I want them to drive-on, to build from here, to grow and be happy, to live vibrant, exciting lives that have meaning. I don't want my death to be a pity party. I want my life to be an inspiration, a message of hope. I want it to be one heck of a final party for everyone who comes to my funeral, a celebration of life!

Swallow your pride about your needs. Wow! This is so hard for Green Berets to do! We are born caretakers. So hard for us to accept that maybe we need others to care for us. Look, I didn't want to ask my Brothers for help. What I have since realized is that I was totally wrong. Letting my brothers help me, helps my Brothers. It's leaving them something to hang onto. The truth is that by allowing Brothers to help, you allow them to do what makes them feel right inside, to show their love and be your Brother. When I am gone, they will feel proud that they helped a Brother through his journey to Valhalla. They did something! That's the key to understanding Green Berets.

We aren't sideline players. We are first string.

We don't just move toward the sound of gunfire; rather, we tear into it with passion and zeal. We seek the opportunity to solve impossible problems with improbable solutions. Brothers want to be involved because loving and helping one another is our code. I do need help, and my Brothers are honored that they can do something for a Brother shot up and caught in the open. They wouldn't leave me behind then, and they aren't going to now. That's called love, and you are expressing it to me so strongly. I am choking up over it. Appreciate all of your blessings. It's time to enjoy your blessings, to thank God for what you have. You have built a life. I got to live one for 56-57 years (not sure if I'll get to 57 yet). That's 30 more than I expected when I got to SF. Wow, that's bonus time! I am leaving a great family, and many achievements behind, as well as my failures. They are a mixed bag, but I am so grateful to have lived as I have.

I relish each failure as much as each success. I own them all, proudly. I feel great that I did my job, and I always had my Brothers' backs.

Ok, so it sucks, but it's the suck and triumphing over the suck that makes life worth living. There is no achievement without failure. No pain/no gain. We all know the suck, truly know it. So it's back again. Not a big deal and maybe it doesn't suck so bad. Maybe Heaven really does have a Valhalla wing where the brave live forever! If it does, I am all in!

Imagine pulling a cork with one of Caesar's legionnaires, a vet of Waterloo, a genuine Hospitaller Crusading knight, Members of the Iron Brigade, a Valley Forge vet, real Vikings, one of Alexander's hoplites, a Roger's Ranger, Gettysburg and Chickamauga vets and much more. Now that's a good time!

I think God is smarter than we are, so he would not build a heaven if there wasn't some special accommodations for "rough men who stand ready in the night to visit violence on those who would do us harm."

We are the shield that protects goodness and right, honorable men inspired to fight and die for a cause. We are the guardians of freedom. There are no cowards on A-Teams, and we weed out the dishonorable fast. We are America's best. All human progress happens because of us. We hold our shields high so it can. We don't fit in well outside our warrior class. We have a few warts, just saying. God knows that so he had to have made a special place for us. I intend to be there.

Time to get back to the one-step rule that all of us learned in Phase 1 or Selection. We accept that there are times when all we can do is just take one more step. That we control nothing else but that step, so it is all we must focus on. The ruck is heavy now, and I am sore and tired, but I'm still in the fight, still taking one step at a time. I resolve to take just one more step each day. Who knows where it might lead. Eventually, it will take me to a place in heaven called Valhalla, but maybe it takes me some more places too? Not sure where I'm going or how many more steps I get to take, but I am taking them, each one, as best as I can. I've got some Brothers around me helping me take each one, though I admit that my rear end is getting sore from those size 10 boots.

Realize the tremendous service Facebook is doing for us. It's bringing Green Berets together once again. We are unifying. We are finding our lost Brothers through it. We are linking Brothers of all ages and finding out how so damned alike we are whatever the SF era we were or are in. Who knows what kind of crazy stuff we're fomenting because we found each other again due to this site? I hope I get to live long enough to see what happens with it. It is amazing.

Thank you, brothers, for being there. Thank you for helping me take these single steps I am focused on each day. Thank you for your love, honor and respect. Sooner or later, I will see each of you in Valhalla or whatever they call the place. God bless you. Appreciate who you are and all the time you have. Please accept my love for you and if I can do anything for you before I pass, I would be honored to do so. I would love to help you just as much as you love helping me. That is the core and soul of who we are and why we are not just Brothers on Earth, but Brothers Eternal.