

The Evening of Terror

J. W. Firey, Jr.

Written in 1990

Back when I was a young lad about nine years old, it was my job to go out into the big pasture and bring in the cows to the milk lot every evening. The big pasture was rough country with hills, a lot of underbrush and many big trees.

There was a creek that came winding down through most of the land. All along the creek bottoms grew heavy, tall timber. It was dark in those bottoms in late evening and it seemed scary to me. One stormy evening, I started out to bring in the cows. Lightning was dancing all around with great claps of thunder. I was very frightened, but knew I must bring in the cows. I was walking up the hill from the milk lot and had not quite reached the top of the hill. Up ahead of me was a big oak tree about 150 feet away. Then right before my eyes, a bolt of lightning hit that big tree and completely destroyed it. That tree exploded in a million pieces and a big chunk of it fell right in front on me about three feet away. The brightness from the lightning bolt seemed to blind me for a while and the loud blast hurt my ears. The little path I was walking on went right beside where the big tree had stood. In just a minute or less I would have been right there when the lightning struck. I was absolutely terrified, but even at that young age, I somehow knew that God was with me. There was smoke coming from the shattered stump of the big oak tree that had disappeared. All over the hillside were smoking fragments of wood that had been blown about. It took a while to pull myself together for I had come so close to walking into my own death. Finally, I circled out around where the old tree had been and went on looking for the milk cows. Some of the cows had bells on, which was a lot of help in finding them. I would go a little ways and stop to listen for the bells to dingle. My heart was pounding so hard and fast. I was afraid the storm was moving in fast. The skies were getting dark. I could not hear any sound of the cow bells. Then I began to cry and asked the Lord to help me. I went just a little farther when, as in a vision, I could see all of the cows far away. I pictured them all lying down in kind of a circle chewing their cud. They were very still and not a bell was dinging. As it turned out, I never would have found them on my own; there was another hill between me and where the cows were. I never once questioned the vision the Lord had given me. I started running to that spot just as fast as I could. When I got there, the cows were all lying down in a circle. They were very still and not a bell was dinging. They were exactly as I had seen them in the vision. I was so glad! I hurriedly got all the cows up and headed them toward the milk lot about 3/4 of a mile away.

The skies were very dark now. Lightning was ripping across with loud blasts of thunder. My feet were bruised and bleeding because I wasn't wearing any shoes. Then

the wind began to blow real hard. Limbs were blowing off trees, some in front of me and some to the side of me. I was really afraid. It looked like I would not make it, but somehow got all the cows in the milk lot and shut the gate just as the storm hit. I ran to the barn for shelter. The wind was absolutely furious and I thought surely the old barn was going to blow away. Next came the drenching rain and a lot of heavy hail. The storm lasted a good while but I was safe now and was very thankful for that.

Now the years have come and gone and I've been caught out in many bad storms since then. I think it was back then that I first came to realize that the Lord was truly my friend. I will never forget that stormy evening as a young boy; how God helped and watched over me through it all.

The Dog I Had to Kill

J. W. Firey, Jr.

Written in 1992

It was in the early fall of the year. We kids had started back to school after a long hot summer. We kids seemed to dread the summer months because of all that work in the hot fields we'd have to do. We walked to school which was two miles away. There was a house right beside the road. It had been vacant all summer but about three weeks after school started, a family moved into the old house. There were a bunch of them. Three of the kids, two girls and one boy, went to the elementary school where we did. But there were about six older boys at home. They had a big, mean looking dog. Every morning and evening as we would pass by the house, he would run out in the road and try to bite us kids. There wasn't any fence around the yard. Sometimes one or two of the older boys would be outside while their dog was chasing us but never once called him down or tried to stop him. They laughed about it and thought it was funny while we kids were trying to escape their mean dog. We got to where we would circle way out around the house down in the field just to avoid that mean dog. Every morning we would leave the road and wade in the grass and weeds. Our feet and legs would get soaked from all the dew on the ground. The dog soon started coming down to the field trying to bite us. He would jump at us and we could hear his teeth pop as he snapped at us. We told our Dad what was going on but he didn't do anything about it. This daily happening caused a great fear in us kids and we dreaded going to school any more. I was just about eleven years old but I made up my mind to kill that dog. I could

shoot a 22 rifle pretty good but I didn't want to take a chance on missing him during the night time. Dad had a double barrel 12 gauge shot gun. I had never shot it before so I knew I had to learn how. One night, I took the gun from the house and hid it in the barn underneath some hay. In the evenings, when I went to get the cows, I would take the gun with me. Little by little I learned to shoot real good. Now I was ready for the big bad dog and meant to put him down. I waited for the first moon lit night around 9:00 and saddled up my horse. I wrapped strips of burlap socks around his hooves so sound would be muffled when he walked on the hard ground or rocks. Also we wouldn't leave any tracks. I got the old 12 gauge shot gun and started out. I knew I had to try to be brave and seemed to have all the courage I needed. I realized I was trying to do a man's job at age eleven. The house with the mean dog was about 1/2 mile away. There was a little hill below the house. I tied my horse up under the shadow of some trees, walked up the road a little ways, then started making some racket. The dog started barking and I saw him come up to the middle of the road. I kept on making racket until the dog saw me and came at me at a pretty good clip. I then squatted down on one knee, and pulled both hammers back on the old double barrel shotgun. I let the dog get within 40 feet of me, then dropped both barrels on him. Not only did I stop him, but the impact from that twin muzzle shotgun blew him backwards about 3 feet. Seemed that dog just couldn't handle the double-o buckshot. I laid that big dog to rest right in the middle of the road on that moonlit night before getting on my horse and riding away. As I rode home, I was thinking how that dog wouldn't be terrorizing us kids anymore. I felt I had done what had to be done. The next morning at school, the kids that lived in the house by the road, were telling all the other kids that someone had shot and killed their dog. I never did tell anyone (not even my brother and sisters) that I had killed that dog. Now we could walk up and down the road without the fear of getting bit.

Now this is how it happened in these old hills some fifty-five years ago.