

"Rough Men Stand Ready"

My most vivid recollection of George Orwell was his book, "1984"; a required reading for one of the grades in high-school. My most regrettable habit was not reading - or reading enough - and with that - developing an appreciation for authors and others like them.

Not to change the subject, but to draw some parallel to the essence of this quote; the movie, "Amazing Grace", has a line of script where William Pitt, Prime Minister of England, is speaking to William Wilberforce on the abolition of the slave trade and other issues of the day. Pitt is discussing the possibility that France

may declare war on England - which may cause further restrictions and policy changes that affect, among other things, activism for such causes as abolition. Pitt advises Wilberforce to quell his activism - which may be interpreted as sedition - and "**leave the dirty work** (of the impending war), to Pitt and other members of Parliament and the military.

" People sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf."

- George Orwell

War (and fighting) is dirty work indeed; and someone must "stand ready" to do it! Many are involved in the public forum and debate on wars and killing - but how many of these have actually experienced the "dirty work"? Even if they served in the arm forces, they may have never been engaged in actual battle and its bloody aftermath. Then there are those who have; yes, those who may be more reserved, less vocal, but more certain of what war is all about. They don't laud their exploits and experiences; but again, sit by quietly and allow the ghosts of these past events rest...and perhaps die if possible.

I remember a folk tale or anecdote and, whether true or not, has some relevance to this subject and circumstance. The story begins when four men are sitting around a campfire; evidently, they have ended-up at the same campfire (or camp) for reasons unknown. Coincidentally, all four served in the armed forces: one as a Navy Seal; one

as an Air Force test pilot; one as an Army Special Force;
and the last as a Marine.

At some point in the evening, they begin to share one-by-one their exploits and experiences: first the Navy Seal and air-sea rescue and recon; test's aircraft and extreme flight conditions for the pilot...with a few near crashes; equal if not more daring raids and insurgences for the Special Forces; and then silence...

As the three waited for the Marine to open-up or divulge his own experience, he sat as before; somber, grave and sedate, **he just continued to stir the ambers of the fire with his bare hand.**

Sometimes words don't matter; other times, words get in the way - or cause undesired or unintended consequences. Words are powerful - but words have limits or boundaries; after that, action is all that counts.

No matter what we might think of the warrior's actions and "dirty work"; the fact is that we can sleep in relative freedom because of they have (or do) their duty. Any warrior knows that war is ugly - even reprehensible. Others want to condemn it in one way or another. Yet few can deny the world's history that war or battle is unavoidable - even certain.

Permanent peace can be found - but not on this earth! Though many have tried - and still do - peace will never last as long as greed and malice remain...or mankind seeks his way.

Besides the physical, tangible wars; there is the war or battle within us. Yes, we have a battle that wages within us. I think Abraham Lincoln may have referred to the preferred side of this internal, individual battle, as "the better angels". Like a tree in some sense, man bears his own fruit; he bears good fruit and bad fruit; he listens to his "better angels" and his "bad angels". Ideally, the angels that he listens to - or the fruit that he bears - are good. Of course, the question may occur: "what is good?"

Now there is a question for our culture: "what is good?"