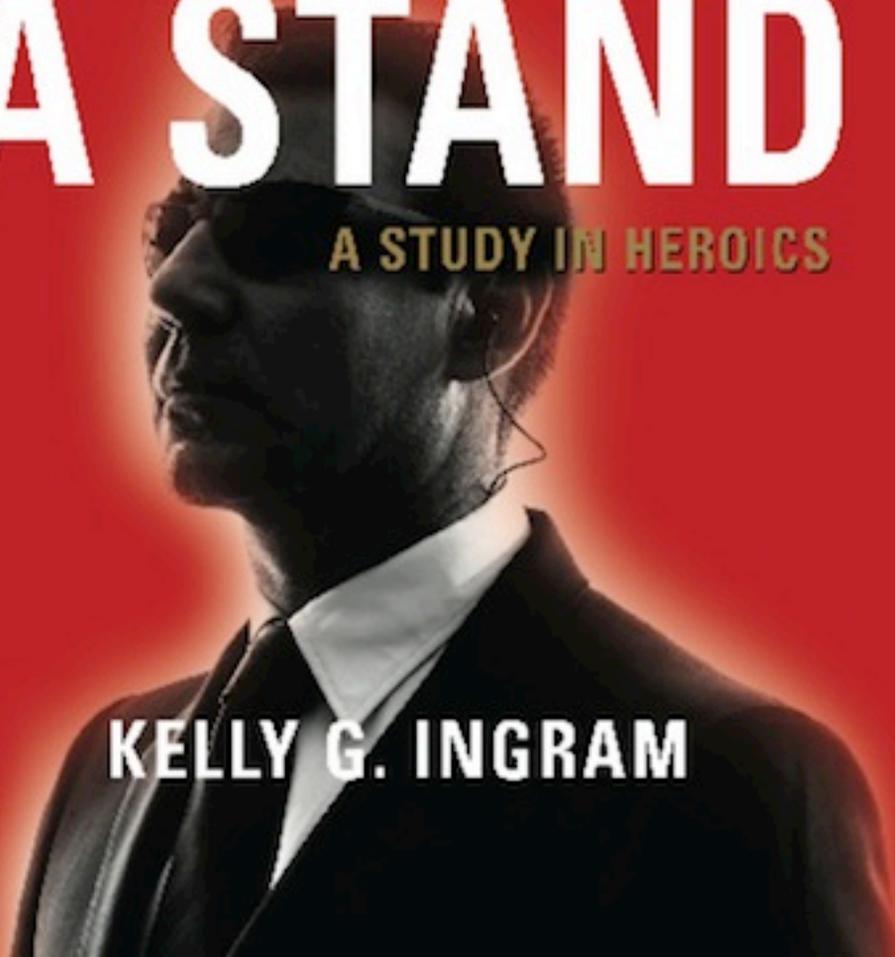
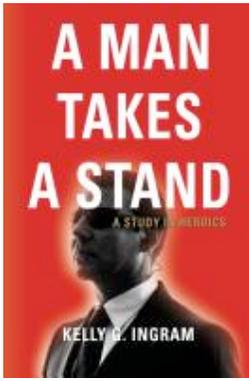


A MAN TAKES A STAND

A black and white photograph of a man in profile, facing left. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white collared shirt, and a dark tie. He is also wearing dark sunglasses. The background is a solid, vibrant red. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the contours of his face and suit.

A STUDY IN HEROICS

KELLY G. INGRAM



What is it that causes heroic behavior in man? True heroism seems to manifest itself when an individual makes a commitment based on his/her personal convictions at the peril of their own safety, welfare, or reputation. Such a quality is something our society finds admirable. This is a story of four men who make such a commitment with varying results. All four are patriots whom stand against the forces that are deteriorating our founders' ideology.

A Man Takes A Stand

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A Man Takes a Stand

Kelly Ingram

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First Edition

Chapter #1

“All Rise”

“All Rise!” Bailiff Mark Andrews orders the court, “The Honorable James T. Caldwell, now presiding.”

Judge Caldwell sat in his high backed leather chair with all the dignity of a leader of a nation. He gave a cursory nod to Bailiff Andrews who promptly announced, “This court is now in session.”

“Ladies and Gentlemen, it is the duty of this court to sentence the defendant, Ronald R. Dyson, who was found guilty in this court on September 16, 2015 of the crime of murder in the second degree, with aggravating circumstances of the victim being a police officer engaged in carrying out his duties. This crime carries a minimum punishment of 20 years to a maximum punishment of life in the Indiana Department of Corrections. I, as presiding judge, have given a great deal of deliberation in this matter. In accordance with the law, I am allowed to add to the sentence for aggravating circumstances and subtract from the sentence for mitigating ones. Both the prosecution and the defense were afforded opportunities to present to this court their respective arguments pertaining to sentencing. Those were heard in my chambers along with written briefs that will accompany the transcripts of these proceedings.”

At the conclusion of his discourse, Judge Caldwell exhaled audibly. He stared at the folder in front of him in a noticeable pause, as if gathering the necessary energy to address the defendant. Finally, Judge Caldwell lifted his head and commanded, “The defendant will Rise!”

“Mr. Dyson, before I administer the sentence to you for your crime, I will take this opportunity to address what a sheer waste this trial is. To squander the lives two good men, and fritter away the energies and resources of the community, is appalling. I have difficulty wrapping my mind around any justification for this waste of lives, let alone the emotional havoc it has wreaked on this community. We have known each other personally for what, twenty-five years? We have worked together during my tenure on the Prosecutor’s staff. You were one of the finest detectives I ever had the privilege to work with; honest, sincere, forthright, and hard-working. I cannot for the life of me understand why a person such as you, who devoted a lifetime to being an upstanding officer of the law, would make such a drastic and catastrophic transformation to become a cold blooded killer. Not only are you in fact a murderer, but a killer of a fellow police officer attempting to carry out his duties. This I find abhorrent. Can you at least shed light on what would motivate you to do such a dreadful thing? Would you be so kind as to enlighten me?”

Ron Dyson stood motionless before the judge and the packed courtroom. He did not waver, he did not shake; he was a stoic figure. After a loaded pause, Ron spoke, “A man stands for what he believes, and that has never changed with me.”

Judge Caldwell’s jaw clenched at the response of the defendant. It was apparent that these few words were woefully inadequate to answer the questions that were foremost in the judge’s mind. A large portion of those in the audience had the very same question turning in their heads. Why would a career police officer commit the ultimate crime against another officer who was engaged in carrying out his duties? It just did not make any sense to anyone. There had to be some ulterior motive not uncovered during the trial. Possibly some mental breakdown on the part of the defendant would explain this behavior. Or perhaps an age old feud that had been brewing for years, something that would make this retired detective snap. However, there was no time for contemplation. Judge Caldwell had attempted to open the door for explanation from Dyson, but the defendant refused to

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explain anything. The curtness of his response burned into the judge's brain; Caldwell turned the statement back on the defendant.

"Mr. Dyson, let me tell you what I believe in. I believe in the law. I believe judgment of those who break the law is the best way for society to remain a decent place for humans to live. I believe that violent men such as you need to be put away from society. There is never an excuse to kill when there is the law to handle discrepancies. Violence is never the answer; this society is only as strong as its resolve to allow the law to regulate it."

Judge Caldwell inhaled deeply and then began to read, "By the power vested in me by the State of Indiana, I hereby sentence you, Ronald Eugene Dyson, to 42 years in the Department of Corrections for the second degree murder of Detective Alexander Polk, a crime committed on June 22, 2012. You will be remanded back into the custody of the Sheriff to await transfer to the Department of Corrections. Do you understand your sentence?"

"I do," responded Dyson.

Judge Caldwell fixed his stare upon the defendant who never flinched. Like two duelists, Caldwell and Dyson locked eyes, both demonstrating strength and bravery uncommon in the average person. Judge Caldwell was unwilling to yield the authority of the law to a man with some hidden personal agenda. Ron Dyson was likewise unwilling to yield his personal justification to the legal authority. The crowd made a collective sigh after the sentence was pronounced, followed by a brief clatter of them shifting in their seats. The tension of the gaze between Caldwell and Dyson soon became so strong and long-lasting that the whole courtroom fell once again into deathly silence.

I had experienced this amount of tension only once before. As a young boy, my father had taken me hiking in the Appalachian Trail. We were walking along the trails, listening to the birds and watching small animals scurry, when all of a sudden my father said, "Thad stop! Listen, what do you hear?"

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I listened and heard nothing. Then he grabbed me and shoved me up into a tree. Shoving me higher and higher, he hauled himself up behind me. I could not hear anything but my heartbeat for a few moments; suddenly a black bear appeared a few yards away. The whole forest was on alert at that moment. Just as my father and I were on alert in the forest that, the courtroom was alerted to the fixed gaze between the judge and the convict.

Moments seem to take hours to pass. The clock on the courtroom wall set a cadence with its ticking. Finally, Judge Caldwell stood and turned to exit his bench. The spell was finally broken when Bailiff Andrews again ordered, "All Rise!"

Judge Caldwell never looked back at the defendant, or the courtroom. Ron Dyson continued to stare straight ahead at the bench that the judge had just vacated. Shortly thereafter Dyson's attorney tugged on his jacket sleeve and directed him to the waiting deputies who were prepared to transport him back to the Howard County Jail. Finally, the most publicized and talked about trial in local history was over.

This was the sentencing portion of a murder trial that took place in the fall of 2013. The trial had been the most talked about topic in this small north central Indiana town due to the characters involved. The victim was a working detective for the local police department, while the defendant in the case was a recently retired detective from the same department. I had been assigned to cover this trial as a reporter for the Richardville Gazette.

Chapter #2

“Introduce Yourself, Son”

My mother would be dismayed at my behavior; she is always saying “Thad! Don’t just start talking, introduce yourself.”

So with that in mind, allow me to do so. My name is Thaddeus J. McWhert. At the time of this story I was employed as a beat writer at a small town newspaper in north central Indiana. My involvement in this story is purely by accident, I assure you. I was twenty-four years of age, a recent graduate of Ball State University, where I received my Baccalaureate degree in Journalism. After several disappointing rejection letters from major city newspapers, I was finally able to secure an interview with the Richardville Gazette in July of 2011. Miraculously, I was offered the job. I had been on staff for just under a year when I was given the assignment to cover the largest news story that had occurred in this small town in the last seventy-five years. But I seemed to have jumped ahead of myself.

I was raised in a small family in Anderson, Indiana, the son of an electrician and a licensed practical nurse. My family was typical of moderate income families in hundreds small mid-western towns. I had dreams of conquering the world coming out of Anderson Highland High School in June of 2007. Of course I did not have any idea how, nor did I realize then that the world was not in the market for new conquerors.

A few weeks prior to leaving for Ball State University, I remember telling my father how sorry I was that I didn’t make him proud of me. My father and his two brothers were all factory

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workers in Anderson. His brother's boys all were athletic, and they would incessantly brag about their sons' endeavors at all the family gatherings. My father never said too much to them, but I remember him looking at me when I apologized for not being a great athlete. He said, "Thad, there are all kind of heroes in this world. Most sports heroes are heroes because of a natural talent that they did not earn. Real heroes are men who make a difference in the lives of those around them. You go off to college and prepare yourself to be one of those real heroes and I will always be proud."

For the first time in my life I understood that my dad would be fine with my following my own path. Now I was not a psychology major, but this affirmation is very important to most sons, and it was very important to me. It empowered me to find direction through the educational system and settle on a career choice. This is a story about how that career choice charted the path of my life.

Upon securing the position at the newspaper in Richardville, Indiana, I thought to myself that it was a far cry from turning the journalism world on its ear, but at least it was a place to start. Little did I know at the time, that this small mid-western town would provide me with more than ample opportunity to grow both as a person and a professional journalist. There is an old adage that constant pressure makes diamonds. I began to realize the significance of that pressure when I cashed my first paycheck. I truly understood how starving artists felt, but at least I was applying my trade and was "self-sufficient."

I remember meeting the editor, Max Weideman, at a local mom & pop restaurant for my interview. As I was there fifteen minutes early, I assumed I would beat him to our rendezvous. I should have learned then, that I would never be ahead of Max, either physically or mentally. I found Max sitting at a small table in the corner sipping on a cup of coffee, reading his ubiquitous newspaper. Max stood approximately five-foot-five, bald on top with grey curls around the perimeter of his head. Sitting atop a bulbous nose were partial wire-rim glasses circa 1955. Max's

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face showed the lines commonly associated with that of a person who had never been able to obtain one full night's sleep over forty years. The wrinkles were deep, but not harsh in their appearance. His eyes were steel grey and sparkled when he talked. Though Max appeared to be an old gentleman waiting to idle away the days of his retirement, under the surface lay the heart of a lion fully engaged in the pursuit of information about what was occurring in his kingdom.

Our interview lasted only about fifteen minutes; Max asked about my education, my family, and then posed only one question "What is it that is the most vital quality in a journalist?"

I stammered some answer about it being important to tell the truth and get the whole story. Max looked at me with his eyes arranged in a fashion that did not match his face. His face took on an inquisitive nature while his eyes opened wide as if I had somehow dimmed and he needed more light to focus on my face. At this point I would not have been surprised if he had said, "Thank you for your time."

However, Max simply stated, "No, you will not often be able to get the whole story, your job is to discover the facts best you can and then present those in a fashion that causes your readers to inquire into the truth. Remember, the press is responsible to focus the attention of a society, so that the society as a whole will expose wrong-doing."

Max leaned forward and extended his right hand stating, "Thanks for meeting with me," as if I was doing him a great favor. He then folded his newspaper, tucked it under his right arm, stood and said, "Young man, I hope you find what it is you are looking for." With that, Mr. Max Weideman turned and tattled off toward the door without so much as a second glance at me.

Being fresh out of college and this being my first real job interview, my heart sank. "What am I going to tell my dad," kept running through my mind when I thought about dad's inevitable question, "How did the interview go?" What would I tell him? Mr. Weideman did not give me any tangible signs that it was a good

interview and his last statement made me believe I was not what he was looking for.

Fortunately my apprehensions were in vain; by the time I had driven home that crazy old editor had called my parents; he interviewed them both over the phone for over an hour. Then Max told my dad to have me meet him again on Monday to discuss how much I was expecting to make. My first lesson from my new boss was to meet your subject, then investigate him. I later asked Max why his interview with me was brief and he stated “Son, your resume told me about your background, your demeanor told me that you were personable, your answer to my question told me that you could think, and your response told me you were willing to take direction. What else did I need to know?”

I looked at him like I have many times shaking my head and saying “But you didn’t know if I could write.”

Max smiled a broad tight lipped grin and said, “You won’t be the first person I’ve taught to write. That’s the easy part. Finding the right person to teach is the hard part.”

I met with Max on the following Monday morning at eight o’clock, thinking I was at least an hour prior to business hours. The first words out of his mouth as I entered his office were “Boy, if you’re going to be in the news business you’re going to have to stop sleeping in till noon.”

Directing me to sit down, he began explaining that this job would require long hours, being on call at least every other week, and that the pay wasn’t all that great. I could expect to make between twenty-five and twenty-eight thousand a year starting out. Probably within two years I could make around thirty-five thousand, but that the benefits were adequate with contributions to a retirement and a health and dental package that were comparable to others in this industry. Finally he stopped with this line of thought and said “Son, this is the greatest job to work at that I have ever had. The truth is, you have to love to work at it because you aren’t going to get rich.”

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In my excitement I stood up and stepped toward him extending my hand, “Mr. Weideman, I thank you for giving me this opportunity, I hope you won’t be disa—”

He cut me off.

“Thad, that is all I’m offering you, an opportunity. You will be the one that makes it a career. Now let’s go out and see if we can locate a desk and chair in the press room.”

He led me to the farthest corner of the press room where there was a desk that appeared to be used by the original designer of the building. I mean this thing was ancient. It was about six feet long and three feet deep, blonde wood colored with various ink stains and gouges. This desk was so old that it was made prior to veneer, I’m sure. I had to move several boxes of old newspapers off the top to look at the writing surface which appeared to have been used as a saw horse during some past remodel project. The five wooden draws had four handles. Two of those with handles did not open and the ones that did took an exorbitant amount of effort to force the frame to release its grip on them. Oh the joys of a first job! Max fortunately was of the time when this work furniture was en vogue and offered me a helpful tip.

“Son, any drawer you get open should not be closed till you wax the bottoms and especially the edges of the face.”

He went on to explain that the old desks were made with natural wood that swells with humidity, and that wax, or bars of soap, could be used to lubricate them into functioning with greater ease. As he turned to leave me to my work he stopped and stated, “Thad you know I meant bar soap or paraffin wax right?”

I nodded affirmative, not really sure what paraffin wax was, nor if I owned any bar soap.

I spent most of the rest of that first day cleaning that old desk. About three in the afternoon, Fred the janitor found me a chair. He was not really janitor by title but an old guy who had been on staff around the paper for forty plus years. He retired but came back to work doing odd details for the staff. It was as old as the

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desk to which I married it. It appeared to be a 1940's style roller chair, with four legs on casters. A small leather seat cushion with absolutely no "cushion" and a large piece of metal bent into a lazy "S" shape holding another small flat leather covered surface to lean back against. The most dominating feature of this object was that it was a hideous turquoise color. At the time of its date of manufacture the chair had been capable of being adjusted in height. This was accomplished in the old way of spinning the chair and allowing a corkscrew mounting system to elongate. I found within a few moments of attempting to adjust it that the past owner had obviously had the metal bar welded at some point, rendering this adjustment mechanism worthless. While sitting in this chair, my armpits were positioned only slightly higher than my desktop, which was extremely fatiguing when attempting to type. This chair was the bane of my existence for the first couple of weeks until I broke down and purchased a used chair at a second hand store around the corner.

On my second day of employment at the Richardville Gazette, I arrived at 7:00 am. Max was already shuffling through piles of notes and making phone calls when I walked into the press room. I noticed other employees already working, indicating that somehow I was still late. Max had not given me a specific time to arrive at work. Later I realized that Max expected his staff to possess the personal drive to dictate their own scheduled time to start in the morning. Entering Max's office I immediately began apologizing, "Sorry I was late," although he had never really established when I was expected to arrive at work. Max waved his hand and pointed to the chair as he was holding his telephone receiver to his ear. It struck me that in today's age, he still was tied to a traditional telephone receiver, but I held back any comment. Later I observed that Max carried a cell phone but he still used his desk phone frequently.

Max hung up and said "Now Mr. McWhert what is it you have planned for today?"

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"I am prepared for any assignment sir," I replied rather arrogantly, although I was not prepared for what Max Weideman had in mind.

"Very good, your first assignment is to go to the library and look up these two names, Olin R. Holt and Henry C. Cole," Max directed.

"Couldn't I just search for them through my computer?" I queried.

"Did Is say search for these names in your computer McWhert? No, I sent you to the library. You young people with your modern gadgets all want instant information. Wonder if the information is what this assignment is about?" Max stated as he stared over the top of his glasses.

So, off I went to the public library armed with two names. I had no idea why my new boss would send me off to find two names at the public library when surely there was some sort of news worthy occurrence in a town of nearly fifty thousand residents, but off to the library I trudged. I had obviously been around a library once or twice during my days at Ball State but it was far different than this library. This public library had a completely different air about it, much less formal and more helpful. I asked the lady at the help desk about the two names and she directed to the reference librarian. There I met Alice Meyer, the reference librarian, a lady in her mid-thirties.

With a friendly smile she asked, "May I help you?"

"Yes" I stammered, "I am looking for information on two people, Henry C. Cole and Olin R. Holt," I answered.

Alice entered the names into her computer terminal and shortly had the following information. "Here they are. Turns out both these men were Mayors of Richardville in the past. I could assist you in locating some olds news clippings about them on the microfiche in the basement if you would like?"

"No thank you, just needed to find out who they were I think," I answered.

I thanked her and started back to the newsroom armed with my information. While en route, I thought to myself that surely

Max would not send me over here just to find out these were names of past mayors. After wrestling this thought to a point of having it pinned down, I found myself at Max's office door. I remember having that sinking feeling that I was just about to prove to my new boss that I had botched my first assignment when Max called out to me.

"McWhert, when are you going to the library?"

"I've already been there. I'm back." I replied.

"Oh, you're back, are you?" Max says with a long drawn out tone like my father would use right before he made me look stupid. "Well what did you find out about those two names?"

At this moment it was confirmed that my first assignment had met with utter failure.

I stammered "Uh, they were both mayors? I assume you already knew that. Maybe I should go back to the library and investigate further, huh?"

Max raised his voice slightly to reiterate his authority to me "I think you should! And think about this while you're doing your research— The past is prologue."

Wow! I heard that expression once before, but I could not think of where. Once I arrived at the library on this second trip, I couldn't shake that phrase from my mind. So like all lazy young people, I asked my new-found friend, Alice the librarian, if she ever heard the phrase "the past is prologue".

"Of course," she responded as her eyes lit up and she began to snicker. Alice then inquired of me, "What is your name?"

"I'm sorry, my name is Thaddeus McWhert, currently employed by the Gazette, but not sure for how long," extending my hand to shake.

"Oh, so you must be the new reporter?" Alice queried.

"Well yes ma'am, I am" I responded. "Graduated from Ball State last spring and just landed this job."

"Well, Mr. McWhert you ever hear in your studies of a fellow by the name of Shakespeare?" Alice teased.

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At once it dawned on me, *The Tempest*, that's where I heard that before. I wondered what that phrase had to do with these two mayors.

"Alice, I need to research those two names I had you look up earlier a little further," I stated.

Alice said, "Follow me". She escorted me down into the basement to a room enclosed behind a glass door marked "Historical/Genealogy".

"Now there is a computer to assist you in finding the files in the drawers. Just type in the names and it will give you what category they are under," Alice stated. "Oh, and if you need further assistance, pick up the red phone and dial 5. That line is to my desk. Good luck!" Then she exited.

Once I located the first article on these names my interest really began to peak. The first name I looked for was Olin R. Holt. This individual was apparently born in Missouri and came to the Richardville community in the early 1920's. He started business ventures in real estate but was admitted to the bar to practice law in Indiana around 1922. He was a colorful character who twice sought the democrat nomination for governor. Failing in this effort to become governor of Indiana, he was elected as mayor of Richardville in 1934. It seemed his right to hold office as mayor was at issue due to a 1930 conviction of conspiracy to violate the National Prohibition Act. Turns out that Holt and the former Sheriff C. Oral Butler had founded an organization known as "The Hoosier Protective Association". The membership of this association was recruited from local liquor violators with the assurance that they would be given legal assistance if arrested. Holt served eighteen months in Federal Prison at Leavenworth Kansas for his conviction, while Mr. Butler served twelve months. It looked as though in order to be eligible to run for mayor, Holt had to have this conviction pardoned by the President of the United States, which he received from Franklin D. Roosevelt on November 5th, 1934. The fact that Holt required a presidential pardon in his political career is rather noteworthy in and of itself; however, it seems Mr. Holt was far from done with his trouble

with the law. In 1938 during his second campaign for mayor, Holt was investigated by the Federal government who charged the mayor and the Board of Works (consisting of the mayor, the City Attorney and the City engineer) with corruption for a scheme that involved them funneling city purchases of bricks that had been cleaned by WPA labor, through a dummy company. This later resulted in convictions of several officials along with the mayor.

Olin Holt appeared to be one of those men who believed that he was just a little smarter than the government and that the law was meant for those other people. In Mayor Holts' defense, he was responsible for bringing a public pool to the city, developing a housing project for the underprivileged, and initiating the construction of a sewage treatment facility for the community. Accomplishments that were impressive enough, had he not ran afoul of the law so often. I realized that public officials and criminals alike were not always exclusively good or bad, but a combination of both.

I spent most of the morning reading up on Mayor Holt and discovered that a lot of the political players in this town were shady in their legal dealings. Mr. Broo, Mayor Holt's law partner who defended him in his first conviction, was later convicted as a co-conspirator in the WPA fiasco. This involved using federal government relief workers labor to line the pockets of local businessmen.

I moved on to the second name Max provided, Henry Cole. I found that my new city of residence was no stranger to the corruption and scandal that can be found in local politics. I discovered that in 1881, Richardville had itself a Mayor who was a civil war surgeon and practicing doctor by the name Henry C. Cole. Henry Cole makes Mayor Holt look like an altar boy by comparison. Dr. Cole returned from the Civil War as a decorated surgeon and brought with him a man by the name of Mollihan. A few years after Cole's return to Richardville, he was known to be connected to a group of counterfeiters; in fact, Dr. Cole was the reported head of the gang. It turns out that the Federal agents ended up arresting a man named Lang, who threatened to begin

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naming names if he was released. Local gossip had it that Dr. Cole stopped at nothing to secure Mr. Lang's release from custody.

By 1870 Dr. Cole managed to become appointed as the city's chief fire engineer, which was ironic due to the fact that he was a suspect in several arson cases. From 1877 to 1880, Dr. Cole served on the city council for the third ward, which was also terrorized by the Mollihan Gang. On his second attempt in 1881, Dr. Cole finally became mayor of the city. He was described as a dapper dresser and womanizer. Legend had it that Dr. Cole was married to a lady by the name of Nellie, who was quite attractive. She shared her husband's propensity to invite the affections of the opposite sex. Nellie developed a fondness for a farmer by the name of Chambers Allen who lived in a small village east of Richardville. Mr. Allen was quite a "player" and, although threatened by Dr. Cole to stay out of Richardville and away from his wife, Mr. Allen did not heed the warning. In October of 1866, Dr. Cole located Mr. Allen in the Richardville Post Office on the corner of Buckeye and Walnut streets. One account stated that Cole entered the post office and shot Mr. Allen in the torso three times, causing his death. The other reported it happened on Buckeye Street outside of the post office. Either way, Dr. Cole shot and killed Chambers Allen. Cole was subsequently arrested and had his trial venue changed to a neighboring county. He was subsequently acquitted on a temporary insanity plea, which evidently was a common defense for murder in those days.

It seems remarkable today that a person could shoot and kill someone in public, in front of witnesses, and be elected mayor of that town within fifteen years. This can either be attributed to the fickleness of community standards or the power of political corruption. Dr. Cole was beloved by many, and staunchly hated by others. One of these local feuds is what cast such a shadow over the greatest and final chapter of Dr. Cole's life. The hatred between Dr. Cole and George Bennett began when the doctor attempted to poison Mr. Bennett's horse. As the story was told, sometime prior to the fateful September evening, a confederate

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notified the county sheriff, J.W. Dehaven, that Mayor Cole and some others were planning to burglarize and burn down Spring Mill located at the corner of Jefferson Street and Indiana Street. This business was owned by the William Styer, J.W. Learne, and the Bennett brothers, George and Asher. Sheriff Dehaven, his deputies, and William Styer all laid in wait for the burglary to happen at the mill. At around ten thirty at night, two men arrived and were in the process of loading meal from the mill when they were confronted by the deputies. Upon spotting the posse outside, one thief swore and took off running and was shot at several times. According to the posse's reports, he fell a few yards from the scene with two pistols in his hands. Several neighbors gathered and quickly viewed the body along with those members of the sheriff's posse; he was recognized as Mayor Cole. There was never a mention of his cohort being identified or apprehended. Although initially public sentiment was divided, it didn't take long for people to side with the sheriff and his deputies. Obviously, the mayor was in violation of the law.

A short time after Mayor Henry Cole's shooting, the Pinkerton Gang (later to become known as the Secret Service) arrived in Richardville looking for him. They had finally garnered enough evidence from some of his earlier crimes to affect an arrest, only to find justice had already been served.

After reading all the documents I could find on these two individuals, I looked at my watch and noticed it was well after 7:00 pm. I ran down the street to the newspaper office to catch Max and tell him how much I discovered. Upon my arrival, I found the pressroom empty and Max's office door closed. Like a small child with a new discovery, I could hardly wait until the morning when I could share this knowledge with my boss. I arrived at work the next morning at 6:30, and to my surprise I even beat the old man in that day. Approximately ten minutes later Max entered the office with a cup of coffee in his right hand. He noticed me standing by his office door and a wry smile crept across his wrinkled face.

"What did you learn my fine young friend?" Max queried.

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“Well sir, I learned that this town has had a couple of characters for mayors,” I spouted.

“You think?” Max retorted “Tell me about them.”

I began laying out all the details I had gathered on each of the characters, taking great pains to note the variations in the stories.

“Why do you think there is so much discrepancy between the stories, Thad?”

“Well, I suppose just a difference in views? I’m not really sure.”

Max, in his instructional voice, replied, “Mr. McWhert, you need to keep in mind that people formulate their own perception of truth. When they receive information that runs in direct conflict with their pre-conceived notions of the truth, they tend to disregard the details that don’t fit into their own justifications. Just something to bear in mind, when you become frustrated with how people receive your writings.”

It seemed that Max was continually teaching those around him about human nature.

“Now that you have completed your first assignment, for the rest of the week, I want you to go back to the library and glean as much information about this community as you can. I will have to trust in your own enterprise to learn background information on your readers that will assist you in understanding the nuances behind public sentiments. I’m not sure that you understand it now, but the better you prepare for your audience, the easier your transition from writer to communicator will be. Do you understand?”

At that juncture in my young life, I felt sure that this was only Max’s way of cooling the heels of one of the sharpest minds ever to be released on the world of journalism in the last half century or so. But Max advised me that all of the knowledge I had gleaned from my collegiate days amounted to the basic training required to be a real journalist; if I wanted to accomplish anything in the newspaper business, I had to acquire a “feel” for the community I would be working in.

Kelly Ingram

Max was always coming up with “learning experiences” for his new reporters. As much as I thought this was a total waste of time, it did not take me long to realize the wisdom of Max’s methods. After only four days in the library on the company’s dime, I would later find myself there by habit, quite often after hours, digging for tidbits of information. It was as if Max Weideman had taken me by the hand and led me to an armory, in order to equip myself for war. Whenever I found a storyline, no matter how inconsequential, I would try to develop a feel for my audience and what they would relate to. That way there would be no hidden surprises or attitudes that I wouldn’t think about addressing prior to turning in my script. I am sure that this eliminated about fifty percent of my editor’s work when I first started producing copy. However, the real treasure was to me as a writer; it taught me to not only evaluate my story for facts, but also to evaluate it in light of my audience’s prejudices. Once I understood my reader, I was more effective at overcoming communication gaps between them and myself.

Approximately nine months later, I really came to appreciate my lessons learned in the archives of our local library. In the late spring of 2012 the biggest news story in a decade or so materialized in Richardville; a retired police officer was put on trial for the murder of a working police detective. Evidently Max believed that I had grasped the lesson well. He called me about a week prior to the opening of the trial.

“Mr. McWhert,” he said, “I think it is time that you take on something a little more important in the newspaper business. You’ve shown that you can cover all the local news of limited interest, now it’s time to step up and do some real journalism. The upcoming trial of Ron Dyson will be big. I want you to cover it from start to finish.”

“But, what about Perry? He is our most experienced reporter,” I stammered.

“Just because I’m giving you a plum assignment doesn’t mean you can tell me who should do what. If I remember correctly, I’m still the editor here and I will decide who covers

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which stories,” Max said with a stern face initially, but was unable to maintain his composure and his face broke into a wide grin.

Chapter #3

“The Tavern Celebration”

Having just exited the courtroom, Judge Caldwell was met by his secretary prior to entering his chambers.

“Carol, replace these files then go home. It’s been a long day, and I’m sure Dave would like to see his wife sometime.”

She turned from him without saying a word. Jim noticed that she smiled slightly at the chance to put off her extra secretarial notations until tomorrow. Carol Adkins had been his assistant for eleven years, following him from private practice into his judgeship. Jim believed she may be the main reason he had enjoyed success. A smile spread across his lips, and he reflected on how fortunate he was to have such dedicated people around him. Next to his wife, Carol was the one person he depended on most, and she never let him down.

Jim turned the ornate, vintage door knob and pushed open the heavy oak door that led to his judge’s chambers. He removed his robe and placed it on the oak hall tree, then exhaled, allowing the tension of the sentencing to release along with his breath. He walked to the wood frame window where he peered out over the street. Jim noticed how the late fall air seemed to glisten with moisture under the street lights. There was no indication of rain on the window pane, but he could detect moisture in the air as it sparkled under the street lights. The cold radiated from the window on the back of his hand. He observed patrons, likely attendees of the trial, making their way across the street to O’Bannon’s Irish Pub. It seemed to him that every courthouse

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square had one watering hole that stayed open after late night trials.

“Theirs is similar to the rest,” he figured, comparing the cozy atmosphere with the antique wood bar to others he had seen; all nicely apportioned so the “upper crust” of the local society would feel like they are of great value. He exhaled, realizing that a man’s life had been irrevocably changed forever, and society just marched on as if this event was but one more item to mark off some hidden to-do list.

Caldwell thought to himself of how utterly simple most people’s lives are. This thought filled him with contempt for the average person. He realized that he was becoming more atypical all the time, since he had become infinitely more aware of what takes place around him. Jim remembered that as a young prosecutor he was so engrossed in making a name for himself that he never reflected upon the person involved, or on how they came to a point in their life that would land them in court. He wondered if it was a mark of old age that he took more interest in the defendants as individuals, or if in this particular instance it was due to the distant admiration he held for Ron Dyson. Actually, he had become aware that his role as judge required him to evaluate the totality of circumstances, which led him to search for reasons of causation. This may be why the Dyson case was so disturbing. Ron Dyson offered no assistance in understanding how he could commit such a murder, and quite frankly that aggravated him deeply. He knew that it would continue to eat away at his conscience until some answers were found.

Caldwell turned from the window and collapsed into the overstuffed leather chair behind his desk. He rubbed his face with his hands, and then pushed them up through his hair. The judge leaned back, arms folded over the back of the chair. Stretching, he took a moment to reflect over the events that had unfolded in his courtroom over the last ten days. A man, with whom he had worked closely during his tenure as a prosecutor, had murdered a fellow officer. Working as a detective, Ron Dyson had provided

detailed testimony in multiple trials which assisted Jim in gaining numerous convictions. Suddenly, this man had seemingly abandoned every principle he ever stood for. Detective Dyson had recently retired from the police force after an illustrious career; within six months he had become a wanted man. Dyson shot and killed a local police detective who was in his home to serve a written order from Homeland Security Agency that commanded him to confiscate his weapons. Ron Dyson had landed on a secret list of possible terrorist advocates, which authorized the Homeland Security Agency to confiscate his personal weapons. Three officers; the victim, a patrolman, and a Homeland security agent were merely following protocol when they met with the violent resistance of an old-time policeman. What on earth could compel Dyson to behave in such a manner?

Caldwell rubbed his face again and flashed back to the present. He realized that he would be expected to make a showing at the pub and propelled himself from the chair. He retrieved his dark wool overcoat from a chair, and looked into the mirror which hung behind the door of his chambers. He run a hand through his wavy locks to tame his unkempt mane and was struck by the look of masked tension in his own face. This case was going to stay with him for quite some time. He resigned that he would have to work through it later; as for now, there were people to see. Caldwell hoped that a cursory appearance would allow him to fulfill social obligations, and then he could escape to his residence. He knew his lovely wife would have supper ready for him which he had been eagerly anticipating.

Caldwell entered the pub and was greeted by the bouncer, Fritz, who extended his hand out to retrieve the judge's overcoat. As their eyes met, it occurred to Caldwell that although Fritz had been the bouncer at this tavern for the last four or five years, he had never had a conversation with him outside of a simple greeting. He found it peculiar that society would place two people inside social circles that are forced to interface, but never really interact. Each party seemed to function on a different plane of existence. Caldwell released his coat to Fritz's firm grasp

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somewhat reluctantly. He wished to make this meeting more significant somehow, but was unsure of how to breach the tradition that had been established between them over the years.

He nodded and gave a curt smile to Fritz, who looked at him somewhat quizzically. Caldwell then made his way inside the tavern. He strolled toward the rear of the establishment until he reached the ornate hand-carved bar. At the far end of the bar, behind the silver clad cash register, stood Lois Bertram, who gave directions to and filled orders from three waitresses. At the front of the bar, working the closest section was her husband Mick. Mick, a tall slender man, sported a wooly mustache and an engaging smile; the kind of smile that instantly alleviated the troubles of the world the moment it was shone upon a patron. Caldwell thought that Lois and Mick seemed to be a perfect complement to each other in the bar business. Lois's organizational skills and ability to manage other workers, coupled with Mack's gift for making people at home upon arrival, was obviously a successful combination.

Mick looked up from the well sink and flashed a grin at Caldwell, "What will it be, judge?"

"Bourbon on the rocks with a twist of lemon, Mick" Caldwell replied.

As Mick slid the drink toward the judge he called, "The Chief of Police already paid for it. He is waiting with some others over in the side room."

Judge Caldwell nodded to Mick and departed to the side room. This room was approximately twenty feet long by fifteen feet wide, and contained five round tables and overstuffed chairs covered in maroon leather. When he entered the room he was met by the familiar faces of the town officials from city hall, a handful local attorney, along with a smattering of other persons of local influence. Caldwell was motioned over to a circle of four men which consisted of the Chief of Police Dick Height, Mayor Tom Krieg, Fire Chief Allen Smyth, and a young reporter by the name of Thad McWhert. Height, a loud and gregarious man of about six feet two and two-hundred-fifty pounds, slapped the

judge on the back and stated, "I'm so glad you gave that son of a bitch what he deserves!"

Caldwell flashed a grimace, and then turned his cold blue eyes toward Height, "I only administered what the law allows for; I take no pride in sending a man to prison for the rest of his life".

"Bah, he needs to be hung for killing one of my officers! He's a damn rogue cop, always was no good. I say good riddance!" retorted Height.

Caldwell reflected over his professional interaction with both Chief Height and detective Dyson. His face contorted into a tight-lipped grin, which hid further meaning underneath. He recalled the amount of good cases fathered by their illustrious chief as compared to the man on whom he had just pronounced judgment, Chief Height would be lucky to have produced one-third as much good for this community. Height realized that the judge was unimpressed with his bravado and excused himself from the small circle. The mayor followed Chief Height, leaving Caldwell, Smyth, and McWhert standing alone.

Fire Chief Smyth then spoke in a low calm voice, "I don't relish your position, your honor. I have known Ron Dyson for twenty years, he was a good man. Good family man that took care of his wife and kids, always honest and straight-forward. Seems like he must have just snapped, to have committed a crime like this..."

This statement was delivered almost in the form of a question to Caldwell, as if Smyth was looking for confirmation that the judge believed Dyson had reacted in this manner due to a mental breakdown. It only served to feed the hunger inside of Judge Caldwell to understand what could lead a career policeman to kill another officer who was simply carrying out his duty. Surely there must be some explanation; however, when afforded the opportunity to explain, Dyson stated simply, "A man has to stand for what he believes."

What did Dyson mean by that? Judge Caldwell continued to turn this over in his mind, losing cognizance of what was occurring in the room around him. After a couple minutes he

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realized his mental absenteeism from the conversation and begged the forgiveness of his company.

“Sorry, gentlemen, I was distracted by what Allen said. If it was a question, I have no answer as to what caused Dyson to do what he did”.

Smyth replied, “Well maybe it ain’t for us to understand everything, sometimes things just happen, we can’t make sense of it all”.

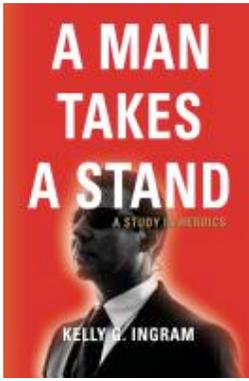
McWhert noted that the judge’s face registered contempt with this line of reasoning, although his head nodded in agreement. He recognized that Judge Caldwell’s probing mind would not allow him to dismiss hidden reasoning like the average person. Caldwell would likely continue to probe this question until it is resolved. The young reporter instantly fostered and admiration for James Caldwell. He realized that here was a mind so conditioned to discover the whole truth that it would not rest with unanswered questions.

Judge Caldwell remarked, “Gentlemen, if you will excuse me, it has been a rather long day and I promised to dine with my wife this evening.”

With that he nodded and made his escape through the bar to the front door. Fritz retrieved the judge’s coat, handed it to him, and bid him good night.

“Fritz, sometime I would like to have a drink with you.” Caldwell stated.

“Me? Well, that would be alright with me, anytime,” replied Fritz as a broad smile leaked across his face. The two men shook hands as Judge Caldwell exited into the cold, damp October night.



What is it that causes heroic behavior in man? True heroism seems to manifest itself when an individual makes a commitment based on his/her personal convictions at the peril of their own safety, welfare, or reputation. Such a quality is something our society finds admirable. This is a story of four men who make such a commitment with varying results. All four are patriots whom stand against the forces that are deteriorating our founders' ideology.

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