

One Man Alone – A Vignette

Harold Jennings didn't have much. He worked two jobs and lived in a weekly rate dump of a residential motel. An old Chevy LUV diesel engine four-wheel drive long bed pickup got him around fairly efficiently and was paid for. It had over one-hundred-fifty-thousand miles on it, and the frame had been replaced, but it did what Harold needed it to do. It did have fairly new alternator, starter, battery, and belts and hoses. The brakes only had twenty-thousand miles on them, as did the tires, which were good for off-road as well as on.

In order to always be able to get to work, he had two rather beat up jerry-cans of diesel fuel padlocked in the back of the truck, along with a spare battery he kept charged, in case he was short on money when he got a job.

He worked primarily as a stucco applicator and the LUV got him to the jobs and back, and even hauled some of the tools and supplies, depending on who he was working with at the time.

His second job was as a day laborer when he wasn't applying stucco. He made a living, but just. As much as he hated it, Harold had applied for and received food stamps. He ate cheap and had no social life at all.

He had what he considered two luxuries in his life. One was an older model, but good refurbished laptop computer with built in WiFi. He spent most of his spare time on it in a free WiFi connection area not far from where he lived. The other was his camping. He tried to go camping several times a year, when there wasn't any work to be had. Unfortunately, with the economy the way it was, he had more opportunities to go camping than he could afford to go. His equipment wasn't anything to brag about, but it suited him.

Harold usually took a pistol on his camping trips. His father had liberated a CZ-27 .32 ACP semi-auto pistol from a German Officer during World War II. The compact CZ-27 and its three magazines were in good shape and Harold kept them that way. He wouldn't carry it in the city, but packed it away in the same small, locked fire safe box where he kept his birth certificate and other important papers.

Since he didn't have a TV, the Internet was his primary source of information. Like thousands, if not millions, of others, Harold didn't like the way the world was going you know where in a hand basket.

But what could he do? He lived payday to payday, with the food stamps the only thing keeping him from starving. Harold decided to develop a survival plan, in case of more of a disaster than the one he was already living.

First, he couldn't do much about moving from the city. It was where the work was. But he needed to find some shelter space outside the city, in case of nuclear attack. Reno was a likely target. And things were shaping up for either a terrorist nuke attack, or nuclear war with China.

He'd been over much of the territory along I-80 north-east of Reno, camping. Though it would certainly be considered trespassing, Harold chose a likely spot several miles from Reno, out of sight of I-80, but close to it.

The terrain was suited to put in one of the expedient fallout shelters illustrated in Nuclear War Survival Skills he seen on the Internet. It would take a while, digging the trench by hand, and placing the scrap lumber and sheet goods he could recover from the construction sites he worked on. If things would hold off for a while, he could finish it. If he had to, he could build it in a week of steady work, by himself, if he had the materials. That would mean a source of materials he didn't have at the moment.

So he started the project one weekend when he didn't have work, but had a job the following Monday. He could have all the empty five-gallon buckets he wanted from the jobs, so he cleaned a couple thoroughly and used a quarter of his food stamps for the month to buy and cache some basic foods. Namely rice, lentils, Ramen noodles, a few cans of beef, tuna, chicken, and turkey when they were on sale to make the other items a bit more palatable. A few cans of fruit and vegetables, also only purchased when on sale, rounded out the first cache that he buried near where he had the trench started.

He kept an eye on international events and kept working on the trench shelter as he had time. He simply couldn't stockpile food every month. He just wasn't making enough cash, and the food stamps only went so far. As it was, he was losing some weight he really couldn't afford to lose.

But as the shelter progressed, so did the supplies. Water was free, as were the empty water bottles he collected religiously. Filled with tap water, they were packed in more of the five-gallon buckets and cached near the shelter as it progressed. He stored as much water the same way at his rented room. The buckets substituted for a bed frame and foundation, with his mattress put on top of the buckets.

Six months into the process and the shelter was finished and the slight mound seeded to help hide it and prevent erosion. He had four buckets of food, ten of water, and one with toilet paper that would be his toilet in the shelter.

But it was late fall and work was slow. He barely made enough to pay the rent on his motel apartment and fill up the jerry-can of fuel he'd emptied while on the last job, before he got paid.

Though he felt better about the preps he had made, he wanted to do more. Much more. The CZ-27 was a sweet little pistol, but it was only good for rabbits and squirrels at short range. Harold was beginning to think about maybe getting a hunting license and trying to take a deer or even an elk. Perhaps both. Either would greatly enhance his food preps. He'd already talked to one of the local meat processors. The owner would make jerky out of half of it, for the other half. It would be meat that he couldn't get otherwise.

And getting a few ducks or a goose would be nice, too. Of course, it wasn't likely he could take a deer with a shotgun in the area he would be hunting, and it was illegal to take ducks

and geese with a rifle. That meant if he wanted to do both, he'd need two guns. Or a combination gun. He'd like a good defensive weapon, too, but that was pretty much out of the question.

He began hanging around some of the sporting goods stores and gun stores in Reno to learn what he could first-hand, after doing a lot of research on the Internet. What he learned was that he probably couldn't afford what he needed. He began watching the newspaper classifieds for a possible face-to-face sale at a better price.

It became a moot point when the day Harold got paid for two weeks work. China attacked Taiwan after Taiwan announced its independence. The US warned China against it. As the news flashed on every TV screen anywhere you looked, Harold didn't hesitate. He spent his entire check. Filled the LUV with diesel, plus bought two addition five-gallon cans and filled them. The rest of the money went into shelf-stable foods..

He added his camping gear, clothes, the stored goods, and a few other things from the apartment and headed out of Reno as fast as the traffic would allow. When he got to where he needed to turn off I-80 to get to his shelter he parked on the side of the road until there was a break in the traffic coming from behind him. There wasn't much heading into Reno.

As soon as he wouldn't be seen, Harold opened the gap in the boundary fence he created when working on the shelter. He put the truck in gear and into four-wheel-drive and drove through. He took the few moments needed to close the gap before he drove up and behind the ridge which hid his location from I-80.

Harold uncovered the hatch to the trench shelter, moved everything from the truck inside. He took his shovel and opened up the caches nearby and added their contents to the shelter. He entered and pulled the hatch closed. Harold settled himself in knowing he would be very lucky if he survived what might come.

When after two days there was no evidence of anything having happened, Harold opened the hatch and took a good look around. He walked to the north edge of the ridge and looked down at I-80. There were a few vehicles headed toward Reno, and still a steady stream of vehicles leaving.

Feeling more than a little foolish, Harold went back to the truck and turned on the radio. Perhaps he wasn't foolish, after all. Nothing had happened in the States, but the US was at War with China over the invasion of Taiwan and things were getting even more tense than before. Their respective Navies and Air Forces were battling fiercely in the Strait of Taiwan.

With a shake of his head, Harold reached to turn off the radio, but it went silent after a loud squeal before he could do so. Harold looked up and could see three bright streaks of light, like meteorites falling to the ground. But Harold was sure they weren't meteorites. He watched for a moment, with the realization that even if they were nuclear warheads, they were on a course that would put them well away from him.

But not Reno. Harold was sure that at least one of the streaks of light had an impact point there. A few minutes later he felt the ground shake slightly. But that was the only effect he

experienced at the time. But there was no doubt left in his mind. The shelter had been a very, very, good idea.

He went back to it slowly, looking at the sky. It would be the last time he saw it for some time, and he knew it.

With the food he'd bought with his last check, Harold stayed in the shelter for over two months. He had no idea what the radiation level might be, but with three days of food left, Harold knew he had to leave and start looking for more. Besides, the attack had occurred in September. It was November now and winter was definitely already settled in. Fortunately he'd brought all his clothing, so he had his Carhartt arctic bibs, hooded parka, and insulated gloves he used for working in the winter. With a set of NEOS over boots he was well protected in the cold weather.

It wasn't a hard decision to decide to go northeast on I-80, rather than back toward Reno. Harold was sure Reno had taken at least one nuclear hit and wasn't willing to risk the radiation without a radiation meter.

So he started up the LUV and got back on the interstate. There were vehicles stopped here and there. Harold assumed they were abandoned due to the EMP. His old LUV simply wasn't susceptible to the pulse, except for the radio, which was dead when he tried it.

Harold checked each vehicle for useable items. He picked up some water bottles and a few other minor things, but no food. Then he came to an ambulance. It was parked right in the middle of the road.

Approaching slowly, and almost ready to pass it by, he decided to stop and investigate. He didn't have much in the way of a first-aid kit. The ambulance should produce one much better than he could ever have afforded.

He checked the cab first. No driver. The key was still in the on position and the lights and what not that hadn't been fried by the EMP had drawn down the battery. Harold doubted it would have started, anyway, or it wouldn't be sitting where it was.

It had a patient in the back, Harold discovered, much to his disgust. The body was in a serious state of decomposition. He was determined to go through the things in the ambulance, but wasn't going to do it with the body inside.

He'd seen enough medical shows to know how to release the gurney and pull it out of the back of the ambulance, the wheels dropping down and locking in place so he could roll it away. With it out of the way, Harold climbed into the back of the ambulance and took stock. What he found changed his plans completely.

Not only did he find the expected medical supplies, which he transferred to the LUV, he found a state of the art radiation survey meter. It was marked with Homeland Security markings. Harold could only guess that a lot of ambulances had received meters after nine eleven. Just in case.

With it, Harold would be able to head back to Reno safely, in terms of radiation. If he ran into any, he would know it now, and could turn around again if needed. In a new, hopeful mood, Harold got back into the LUV, placed the radiation detection meter on the seat beside him, and turned the truck toward Reno.

He continued to stop at each vehicle, just in case he could find useable items. Most were abandoned, with no sign of anyone around. But there were a few where the occupants had died inside. Harold could only think they must have had heart attacks, since there were no marks on the bodies, and it was too far from Reno for the blinding flash or thermal radiation to have been the cause.

Of course, those dead in wrecked vehicles were understandable. Many of the cars had been going at high speed when they lost engine power due to the EMP. Without the engine, power steering and power brakes stopped working and the cars were essentially uncontrollable.

The closer he got to Reno, the more vehicles he encountered, headed both to and from the city. The radiation level was still nearly non-existent on the lowest range of the meter. Harold came up to a point in one of the canyons where the road was blocked on the Reno bound lanes. A major pile up had occurred.

Harold stopped and got out to investigate. There were several semi-trucks involved, including several box trailers and reefers. Either type could mean food. He said a prayer when he check them one after the other and found one trailer load of packaged food.

Unfortunately, one of the reefers had held frozen foods. Everything had gone bad. Harold shook his head. If things had happened just a month later, the food would have been kept cool enough not to spoil.

But he had plenty of food for a long time in the other trailer. Problem was, with the weather getting colder, which would have helped the frozen foods, much of the wet pack canned foods would freeze and burst. He needed to find a good place to transfer everything edible to a building he could keep heated.

With that in mind, Harold kept going, still stopping to check the vehicles. He felt a lot better after he found one pickup that held a nice shotgun. There was only one box of birdshot, but it was better than just the CZ-27 .32 he was carrying.

There had been a lot of development along the Truckee River and Harold decided to check the first of those subdivisions he came to. It wasn't far to the first one and Harold took the nearest exit.

He drove the quiet streets. He didn't see anyone. The radiation level was up to 0.01 r/hr, which Harold was sure was still quite safe. But it indicated that there probably had been some fallout here.

Looking for houses that had chimneys, Harold continued his search. He hadn't seen any smoke from the Interstate, but that wasn't a sure sign no one was home. He stopped at the first house with a chimney. It was locked, the garage door down and also locked.

Harold went around to the back and tried the back door. Locked. But Harold was ready. He had a small pry bar and it took no time to spring the doorframe enough to slip the lock. Harold put the bar down and took the shotgun in his hands.

There was no one home, and from the looks of it, the occupants had made a very quick departure. Drawers, cabinet doors, and closet doors were open and many things flung about in the haste to pack what the family considered essential.

After a quick inspection to make sure no one was there, Harold checked the fireplace. A gas log. He muttered a bad word and left the house, picking up the wrecking bar as he did. It took him a dozen tries before he found a house with a working wooden stove or fireplace. The first house he found that had one, actually had both. A working fireplace in the living room, and a woodstove in the family room.

There was even a good supply of firewood already stacked ready. Saying a little prayer, Harold decided he'd found his winter home. He immediately began transferring the food from the semi-trailer to the house. It took a couple of days. He spent another week finding and moving firewood from every place he could find that had even a few pieces.

He checked each of the houses from which he took firewood, but the first place he'd found was still the best for his use. It was close enough to a spot on the river where he could get water, and had enough topsoil to bury the waste from a chemical toilet that he found at another house with lots of camping gear.

Nevada was a gun friendly place, and Harold began to accumulate a decent arsenal, though there wasn't much ammunition for any given weapon. He would like to find a way to open the gun safes he found. He had the good luck to find the combination or keys to a few of them, but many were beyond his ability to get into. He decided he was getting enough to get by without worrying about those he couldn't get into.

He set loaded guns all around the house so he would have one available no matter where he was inside, without having to carry a long arm with him all the time. He kept an old Cold 1911 pattern pistol on his hip with six magazines in pouches. He'd found an ankle holster that would hold the CZ-27 and he kept it loaded and on his ankle, too.

With water, sanitation, food, and shelter taken care of for the winter, Harold settled in for the duration. Investigating Reno and Sparks would have to wait until the next spring, if there was one. The radiation levels would be down even more, making it safer.

Harold saw not a soul that long winter. But he did stay close to the house, venturing out only to get water and bury the contents of the chemical toilet. He'd thought ahead and dug a trench for the waste much longer than his immediate needs called for. But it allowed him to

simply add waste and cover it from the dirt pile beside the trench. Though he did have to chop up the dirt a bit with the shovel to cover each load he added, he didn't have to dig in the frozen ground.

In his early searches of the community, before it got difficult to go out, Harold had collected every useful book he could find that might help in the future. He also took back to the house plenty of fiction to read during the long winter. Reading kept him sane.

Harold didn't go out exploring the next spring until he was sure what snow was left wouldn't be a risk. Though the LUV was four-wheel-drive, and quite capable, it didn't have a winch. If he got stuck he'd have to use the old Hi-Lift jack he had and tow cables to try to get unstuck. It was both difficult and somewhat dangerous way to do it. Better to wait a few days more.

But the day finally came when Harold decided the risks were about as low as they would get. With the radiation meter on the seat next to him, along with a rifle, Harold headed for Reno/Sparks. He picked up where he'd left off the previous fall, checking vehicles as he traveled I-80 toward the two cities. The closer he got to the cities, the more stalled traffic there was.

With the house already fairly well stocked, despite the long winter, Harold took only the choicest of the items he found. Still, it took him two weeks to work his way to Vista Boulevard cross street, the recognized eastern edge of the two cities.

He began to fan out on the side streets, looking for another house in which he could take up semi-permanent residence. He stayed north of I-80, in the Sparks area of the two cities. The radiation level was okay in that area, but on the east side, south of the Interstate was where the airport had been. It had taken a nuke. Harold stayed well away from the hot spot after his first trek in that direction. There was massive destruction, anyway, plus, the closer he got, the higher went the radiation level, and rose faster the closer he got. When he hit 0.5 r/hr he immediately turned back and kept going until the level was below 0.01, north of the Interstate.

The level of destruction lessened as he went north on the east side of the McCarran circle. The radiation level fell as well.

He found what he was looking for off North McCarran, up in the Spanish Springs area. There were some newer houses in the area, some of them built green and semi-off grid. The area was very hilly, and that had protected some of the houses from the worst of the blast wave that had occurred.

After clearing the bodies from it, Harold took up residence in a house that boasted an outside wood furnace, with PV solar panels, batteries, and controller to power the pumps and blowers. It was one of the houses that was on the north side of a ridge line that had protected it somewhat from the blast wave and it was mostly intact, unlike the other houses in the same area that had moderate damage.

The house had solar assisted hot water, and another bank of PV panels to provide electricity to a few other critical circuits in the house, including the well. The house was on an onsite septic system, so Harold had both running water and flush toilets again.

The family had tried to make a shelter in the basement, but the heavy fallout right around the detonation was more than the shelter of the simple basement provided.

Harold took a few days to move everything he'd accumulated at the other house to his new one, including all the firewood. A steady supply of firewood was going to be critical. There was already a winter's worth at the house, but Harold was worried about cutting more, by himself, to keep up with the future winters. That was assuming he didn't head south. The hitch to that was finding fuel on the way. There was still plenty available in semi-trucks stopped on the road. He'd been siphoning their fuel tanks from early on. But the fuel was getting a bit iffy now, being several months old and having gone through a rough winter.

Once he was in place, with everything moved, Harold changed his tactics somewhat. He'd found a very good mountain bike and began exploring the northern areas of Sparks on it, keeping a city map with him that he marked with places he wanted to bring the truck to so he could take back to the house the things he found. That was the way he spent the late spring and summer.

Harold still hadn't found anyone alive. But he did find several Amateur Radio equipment set ups and moved the one that looked the easiest to use to the house and began to listen every night for other survivors.

Another thing he found was a firewood dealer. It was in an area that had a radiation level a bit higher than he liked, but by using an old bob truck he managed to get running, he was able to move several loads of the wood to the house without getting a dose of radiation to make him ill.

The firewood, with the packaged foods he'd found, set him up for the coming winter. He'd yet to make it to the downtown area of Reno. He could tell some of the taller buildings had suffered major damage, but he couldn't tell if he'd be able to salvage anything in the area or not. He thought there might be quite a bit of food left in the casinos, with all the restaurants in them. A lot of it would be fresh food that was long spoiled. But there should be canned goods and packaged items that could still be good.

But it would have to wait. With a couple pickup loads of books and DVD's he'd found, Harold set in for his second lonely winter.

It went much like the first, but was simply easier due to the features of the house. He was warmer, cleaner, better fed, more entertained, with a working DVD player and TV. And better rested. While not bullet proof, the house had quite a few protective features, not the least of which were quick release security bars on all the first floor windows and doors.

Harold was confident that he would wake up during any attempt at entry. So he slept much more peacefully than he had the first winter. He finally figured out the radios he'd found and made contact with quite a few people. Just no one anywhere close to Reno.

But he was more than ready to get out the next spring, when it finally rolled around. He got out the bike, his pistols, and favorite rifle, and began the initial look around after the winter.

He continued to stay well away from the crater at the airport, but was able to circle down south, keeping well to the west of the airport. And he was finally able to explore the downtown casinos. He doubted he be able to salvage anything of any size from the area. He couldn't get the LUV downtown due to the debris from the tall buildings filling the narrow streets four feet or more high.

But the major casinos were side by side and had access that way. Plus there were a lot of stout awnings and elevated crossovers that allowed access enough to get around on foot or on the bicycle. Harold managed to get into one on the north end of Virginia, and went from one to the other, in turn. Mostly just looking around.

Harold was surprised there were so many bodies. Even in the worst of the scare people had wanted to gamble, and the staff wanted to make money. So things were going at sixty-percent or better at the time of the attack.

He'd seen as much as he wanted when he remembered the pawn shops in the downtown area. Harold went looking. There were several. Not as many guns as he expected. There was a lot of jewelry and such, but Harold didn't know much about the values, particularly now. So he left it where it lay.

Having read about the probable value of gold and silver coins, however, he took all of those he could find. Then he went looking for regular coin shops in the two cities. He checked the telephone book for that search and decided he would need to make some quick dashes to them, for at least three of them were in the higher radiation level zones.

And since he was taking a risk, Harold decided to hit the gun stores and pawn shops at the same time he was going for the gold. It was stressful and hard work. While down town he constantly heard things shifting and moving whenever the very common high winds whipped through the downtown area.

But he finally had made his passes down each street, taken what he wanted, and left. It was the same with the dash runs into the higher radiation area and back out. Stress and hard work. But he wound up with a fortune, if gold, silver, guns, and ammunition were worth anything. He added to his food stocks a little bit from the casinos, but not as much as he expected. One could use only so many #10 cans of basic pasta sauce.

Worried more than a little about the radiation doses he was receiving, Harold backed off the searches east of Virginia Street as he went south and stayed well to the west for the most part. Though it didn't go in or right next to the airport, it came too close for comfort.

Harold had been very careful to check the metallic objects he salvaged in the radiation zones. None of it had any induced radiation from being close to the detonation, but he began to get signs of that nuclear effect as he followed South Virginia. That was when he backed off and stayed further west.

By the time he needed to think about holing up again, for another harsh winter, Harold had investigated the entire area within the McCarran circle that was safe to do so. Deciding that where he was would be the best place to stay for the next winter, he began the process of getting things ready for it.

He picked up several more loads of firewood. There was a lifetime supply at the place for one house. He would have taken a couple more loads, but when he refilled the truck's tanks with salvaged diesel, it wouldn't run.

Harold always took the bicycle with him, even when he was in the LUV or the bob truck, so was able to ride home without incident. But it had him worried. Losing the transportation of the LUV would really hurt. But it was too late in the season to try to do anything about it. He holed up for the winter again, with more books and DVD's to keep him company.

Having started the LUV once a week to keep the battery charged in the bitter cold weather, Harold discovered in January that the truck would no longer start. The battery was fine. The fuel was marginal to start with, and had jelled, to boot.

The knowledge nagged at him during the rest of the winter, as he wondered what he was going to do. The only thing he could come up with was to try to go to Lake Tahoe on the bicycle and see if he could find any Pri-D product at one of the marinas. His research and reading before the war indicated it was a good likelihood. If he could get some, and it was still good, then he could freshen up enough fuel to get by for a couple more years, if he was careful.

Anxious to get it done, Harold readied his camping gear in late March, and waited for the weather to break before he set off. He'd found a bike trailer in one of the bike shops in the city and had taken it, along with plenty of spare parts and maintenance items for the bike he had. So, when he was confident the weather had changed for the better, he set out. It took him much longer to get to the north end of Lake Tahoe than he thought it would. There was still snow in the high elevations he had to go through and he found himself staying a day or two at a time in places where he had an easy supply of firewood for heat and cooking.

But he finally got to the Lake, having used all his food for both legs of the trip on the first one. His first priority was to find some food. He searched the houses and shops around the lake and found enough to do him until he could get back home. There were no signs of anyone having survived the fallout from the nukes that had devastated California.

With food to last a couple of weeks, Harold then checked the marinas. He found what he was looking for, though not as much as he'd hoped. At least at the first marina. He checked each one on the north and east coasts of the Lake and managed to find several cases.

It was all he could do to travel up a slight slope peddling the bike with the load of food and fuel conditioner he had in the bike trailer. On the steeper slopes he had to push the bike, he simply couldn't make any headway, even in the bike's lowest gear.

Harold had to be very careful when he was on a down slope. The bicycle had disk brakes front and rear, but it was all they could do to control his speed going downhill. But Harold persevered, and finally made it home. He hadn't had anything to eat the last two days of the trip and ate ravenously the first day he got back.

His appetite satisfied, Harold drained the fuel tank of the LUV, added the appropriate amount of Pri-D to the tank and put the fuel back in. Since the fuel in the lines hadn't drained, it took quite a bit of cranking the engine to get the treated fuel to it. But the engine finally sputtered to a start, and after several minutes of rough running, settled down.

With the LUV back in service, Harold was able to get the bob truck going again, too. He wanted it so he could salvage the useable packaged food from two grocery delivery trucks he'd found on the trip to Lake Tahoe.

A month of work had him well supplied with food again. Mostly dry packaged food. The wet pack cans and jars had pretty much all frozen and burst with the hard winters they'd been through.

Then came a decision. Did he hang around Reno and Sparks, or go in search of other survivors? Just because he wasn't hearing them on the Amateur radio, didn't mean there weren't some out there.

But he didn't want to go further west, into California. It had been hard hit with nukes. So he turned his eyes east again, thinking about his original plan to go to Winnemucca. The more he thought about it, the more he rejected the idea.

The radiation was still falling where he was. There was no reason not to grow as much of a garden in the yards around him as he could in Winnemucca. He had the seeds from several home centers.

He had fuel. And there was the opportunity to hunt on the northern outskirts of the city now that some animal life was coming back. The solitude was less than pleasant, but he had movies and books, and his contacts on Amateur Radio. Eventually someone would come to the area, he was sure. Harold decided to stay.

The decision made, he gathered up what he needed to do a large garden and set about preparing the yards of the nearby houses. Once the garden was growing, Harold stocked up on more firewood, enough for two winters. Finally, he expanded his searches beyond the McCarran circle, primarily to the north and west. It was just before winter when he discovered the Cabela's on I-80 outside the city going west. It hadn't been touched. It was a brand new building and still in good shape even with the bad winters and no maintenance.

Harold picked up several more firearms from the huge selection the store had, and took all the ammunition that he had guns to shoot. There were also several cases of Mountain House Freeze-dried entrees in #10 cans, plus several boxes of freeze-dried camping food in pouches from several manufacturers. It wasn't a great amount of food, but it gave Harold the chance to put in some caches of food and weapons, just in case he wound up unable to get back to his house.

Harold lived his lonely life there in Reno for years. He'd been forty-one when the war started, and now, at fifty-three, he was going to meet the first person he'd seen in all those years. People were beginning to venture out from the relative safety of the enclaves they built up after the war. In part, looking for supplies they couldn't make or weren't available in their local area.

The first person he saw was the leader of the group at Winnemucca. There had, in fact, been a group of survivors there the entire time. Had Harold chosen to go to Winnemucca on that decision day, he would have been amongst one of the more successful groups of survivors.

As it was, with the things he'd accumulated: the food, two working vehicles, the means to treat fuel, gold, silver, guns, and ammunition, he was considered wealthy, and was invited to move to Winnemucca to live out his life. With all the gold and silver he had, he decided to become a banker. The Reno Sparks area had provided him with everything he'd needed for all those years, just by him taking it. Harold decided it was time to give some of it back.

People needed the wherewithal to rebuild and improve the new ways of life people were living. Harold was happy to supply it, at a very small fee.

End *****

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