

And God Sent the Rescuers

by
Gary Dielman

Lying against the passenger door of her tipped-over Jeep Wagoneer, Ann Ward wondered if she would come out of her predicament alive. At four o'clock in the afternoon of October 13, 1998, Ward found herself alone in her wrecked vehicle on a mountain road a few miles southwest of Baker City. Although unharmed by the accident, she was not physically able to drag herself out of her wrecked vehicle and was not dressed to spend a night in the cold. She was not afraid, just "resigned." She told herself she was 81 years old and had had a good life. But she also thought she would not mind if God sent some hunters down the road.

The day had begun ordinarily enough for Ward, a long-time resident of Baker City and widow of Dr. Gaylord Ward. She went grocery shopping in the morning. At about ten o'clock she had just arrived home, when a man about thirty years old, who later identified himself to her as Jim Reedy, age 42, approached her saying he had heard her Jeep Wagoneer was for sale. After Ward told him her vehicle was not for sale, Reedy offered to help unload her groceries. After assisting her, Reedy asked if she would run him over to Wade Williams Field just a few blocks away, so that he could retrieve some personal items he had stored there. When Ward expressed her reluctance to do so, Reedy reminded her that he had just done her a favor.

Although her purse and driver's license were still in the house, Ward decided to give the insistent man a ride just to get rid of him. After he picked up his things at the ball field, Reedy then asked Ward to drive him somewhere else. On the east side of the intersection of Myrtle and Dewey, he asked her to turn left, which she refused because a left turn into the underpass is not allowed. So they turned north onto Dewey heading to Ward's house located just a few doors down the street. But Reedy wanted her to drive him to a destination up Second Street. She reluctantly turned left off Dewey onto Second. But after driving half a block, Ward decided she just wasn't going to drive Reedy around anymore. She stopped her Wagoneer right there and directed him to get out.

Instead of getting out, Reedy ordered Ward to change places with him so he could drive. Ward defiantly remained sitting behind the wheel. Reedy then tried to drag her to the passenger side of the seat, but Ward grasped the steering wheel with both hands and refused to budge. Not having the necessary strength or leverage to extract Ward from the driver's seat, Reedy somehow managed to get astride Ward on the driver's side of the Wagoneer. Grabbing her by the arms, he tried to lift and drag her out of the driver's seat. Still failing to move the valiantly resistive eighty-one-year-old Ward, Reedy struck her on the cheek bone below her left eye causing the eye to eventually swell completely shut. At one point he grabbed her hair and said, "I'll pull it out! I'll pull it out." An x-ray later revealed cracked facial bones and further examination showed lumps and bruising the full length of both arms. Part of the left side of Ward's face is numb yet today.

Finally overcoming Ward's resistance, Reedy took control of the vehicle and headed out of town on the Sumpter Highway. Ward fastened her seatbelt and settled into her captive status. A couple of miles south of town, Reedy turned right onto Elk Creek Road. Ward even tried to be helpful to her captor. When he shifted the Wagoneer into four-wheel drive without getting out to lock the hubs in, she told him that wouldn't work. Ignoring her advice, Reedy left the gearshift in four-wheel drive but without the benefit of any additional traction. Eventually they ended up on Auburn Road.

After the initial struggle over control of the Wagoneer, Reedy inflicted no more physical harm on Ward. In fact, he attended to her facial injuries by taking off his undershirt, dipping it into creek water, and wiping the blood from her face. He tore off a piece of the shirt and used it to plug her bleeding left nostril. He also located a lens, which he had knocked out of her eyeglasses, cleaned it off, and placed it back in the frame.

Reedy told Ward that she was a "feisty old lady." Although his mood alternated between anger and despair, Ward said, "Funny thing was, I wasn't the least bit afraid of him." Reedy acknowledged that his life was a mess. He told Ward his mother never loved him. At times he would cry and shake uncontrollably. During one of his crying spells, Ward placed her hand on his to calm him. But in all the talking he did, Ward said Reedy never took responsibility for anything. It was always someone else's fault.

Reedy asked Ward if she had a gun or cigarettes in the jockey box, to which she responded in the negative. Not trusting her, Reedy checked out the jockey box but could find nothing but a screwdriver, with which he armed himself. But Ward did not consider it "much of a weapon." Reedy, who Ward later learned had a serious drinking problem, located an almost empty bottle of whiskey he had placed in the back of her Wagoneer. He offered Ward a drink, which she declined. When he insisted, she tried to appease him by wetting a couple of fingers with whiskey, touched them to her mouth, then expressed disgust at the taste. But during her hours-long ordeal with Reedy, he drank only a few swigs of the whiskey. At no time did Reedy appear to Ward to be drunk.

At one point in the day, Reedy looked at the mountains and said, "Isn't that beautiful?" Reedy, who seemed to have a genuine affinity for the mountains, told Ward that his favorite place in the mountains was nearby. He said planned to drive them to that place, kill himself, and then she could drive his body back to town. Ward didn't think the role he intended for her was very practical, because she was "totally lost" with no idea about how to get back to town. But she didn't worry much about his announced intention to kill himself, even though he talked about it more than once, because it was her impression that he really wasn't serious.

Around two o'clock in the afternoon, Reedy wrecked the Wagoneer. Just for kicks, he had been driving the Wagoneer up and down the bank on the uphill side of the mountain road. After doing this several times, he overcorrected causing the Wagoneer to tip over onto the passenger side. Neither Ward nor Reedy was injured in the

accident. Reedy, who clambered out the driver-side window with a helping boost from Ward, told Ward he was going for help and took off. For her part, Ward wasn't counting on ever seeing him again. Due to a long-term hip problem, Ward was unable to extract herself from the vehicle.

Lying alone in the Wagoneer, Ward still had her wits about her. She noticed the turn signal was still blinking and the ignition key was still in the on position. She could not reach the turn signal but managed to turn off the ignition, so the battery would not drain down. The rest of her keys were no longer attached to the ignition key, so she searched for and found her keys putting them in her pocket.

After about half an hour Reedy returned, climbed back into the Wagoneer to look for his whiskey bottle and to retrieve his coat. He tried to help Ward get out, but even with assistance she was not able to manage it. Extremely frustrated that the Wagoneer was undriveable, Reedy picked up a handful of gravel and threw it at the vehicle.

At one point when Reedy was standing outside looking through the windshield at Ward lying on her side against the passenger-side door, she asked him, "Are you proud of what you've done today?"

"No," he answered and took off again.

As mentioned at the beginning of this story, Ward knew she was not dressed warmly enough to spend a night in the mountains in October. Lying alone in her vehicle, she wondered if she would survive her kidnapping but prayed that someone would come along and find her.

In the late afternoon her prayer was answered. "God was with me on this one," she said, because about 4:30 in the afternoon, two hunters, Odette Patterson and Dennis Hanby, drove by and discovered the wrecked vehicle with Ward inside. About then Reedy returned with a four-wheeler and a chain he had borrowed from a rancher. He announced his intention to right the vehicle. The hunters said it would be better if the vehicle were not touched until the Sheriff came. Then Hanby drove off to find a phone to call the Sheriff's office for an ambulance, while Patterson stayed with Ward. Two other hunters from the same hunting party also arrived. Reedy, not wanting to be around if law enforcement was coming, decided to leave. But before departing he asked, "Is she all right?"

The Sheriff's office dispatched Deputy Tim Fisher and an ambulance. But, even after they arrived at the accident scene, they were unable to get Ward out through the driver-side window. Finally success came after they removed the windshield. Around 6:30 in the evening the ambulance arrived at St. Elizabeth Hospital with Ward. By this time, Ward, not so concerned about herself, was "frantic" with worry about her daughter, Stacy, who would herself be worried and confused by the disappearance of her mother. Somehow Stacy got word that her mother was in the hospital. Upon seeing her mother with bruises and one eye swollen shut, she asked, "Oh, who did that to you?" After

spending two nights in the hospital, Ward was finally back in her home with Reedy securely locked up in the Baker County Jail.

When this interviewer asked Ward about how she was coping with her experience, she said, "I don't want to be left with a feeling of hatred or bitterness." But she said she was "willing to let the law take its course" with respect to what happened to Reedy. Thinking about how we are supposed to forgive those who trespass against us, Ward said, "I don't feel much like forgiving this trespass." Ward believes that forgiveness should be preceded by an admission of guilt and repentance.

[Author's update, March 2013: James Reedy was sentenced to about 14 years in prison for assaulting and kidnapping Ann Ward with an early release date of February 2012. Reedy was arrested in March 2013 for breaking into the Baker Garage and stealing a \$61,000 Camaro. He was apprehended a day later and is awaiting trial.]

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