

**LETTERS FROM GRANDPA**  
**# 166**

Dearest grandchild,

One of my favorite speakers **was** the late Dr. Henry Morris. In 1966 he spoke at the Ozark Christian College and told the following story about Tommy Smoak. Dr. Morris was a scientist and his analytical mind placed miracles in different categories. For example, he considered Balaam's ass speaking with a human voice as a grade A miracle (Nu. 22:30). Apparently nothing like this ever happened before or since. By contrast, Dr. Morris classified the earthquake in Philippi as a grade B miracle (Acts 16:25 - 34). While earthquakes happen all the time, this one happened in such a way that the Philippian jailer was converted and the Gospel was advanced. It seems evident that God was orchestrating the event.

During his lecture Dr. Morris told of a B-47 that exploded over Little Rock, Arkansas on March 31, 1960. Three crew members, and two people on the ground were killed. The only crew member to survive was Lt. Thomas G. Smoak. Dr. Morris classified his survival as a grade B miracle.

Here is the story. A B-47E strato jet bomber took off from the Air Force Base in Little Rock en route for Houston. At 6:00 a.m. the airplane exploded over Little Rock at an altitude of 15,000 feet. The explosion was so great that some thought we were under a nuclear attack by Russia. Wreckage was scattered over a large area damaging 116 homes, a wide variety of businesses, and collapsing an apartment building. The survival of Lt. Smoak involved a series of very unusual circumstances that reflect the fingerprints of God.

Lt. Smoak got up at 3:15 a.m. to prepare for the day. Instead of his comfortable nylon suit, however, he chose instead to wear the bulky and awkward suit that was fire resistant. On his way out of his home he picked up a card upon which he had written Ps. 37:23, 24. **"If the Lord delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand"**. These were his memory verses for the day.

When the airplane exploded Lt. Smoak was in the middle of a ball of fire and was being burned alive. A second explosion, however, ejected him from the plane but his parachute was on fire and full of holes. The newspaper quoted him as saying: *"Because my chute had so many holes in it, I couldn't control it. I could see the downtown area, I saw the river. I passed all that. I was over an area of residential homes. I had no control. I was just there for the ride"*.

Smoak fell onto the driveway of Jimmie Lee Holeman, a registered nurse who lived at 500 N. Martin St. She heard the explosion and ran outside. When she saw Tom streaking toward her concrete driveway, she began to pray. There were two big trees in her yard that spanned the driveway. The summer before, they had considered cutting down these trees, but decided to let them stand. Remember! Smoak had no control over where he fell. He was only "along for the ride". Providentially, he fell right between those two trees. The lines on his burning chute snagged the limbs of the trees at just the right height to deliver him gently to the driveway below. Tom was

burned so badly that it took two years for him to recover, but he gave God the credit for the incredible fact that he was still alive.

Dr. Morris smiled and said: “*Nothing miraculous about that!*” Then added: “*Of course, the statistics really took a beating*”. As a scientist he was calculating how many thousand people you would have to drop from 15,000 feet over Little Rock, Arkansas before their burning chutes just happened to snag the right branches in the right sized trees to save their lives.

Fortunately, as we said, Lt. Smoak did give God the credit for sparing his life. In gratitude to God he left the Air Force in 1962 and became a missionary pilot serving for twenty years with Jungle Aviation and Radio Service in Columbia, South America.

God is Sovereign and can speak to us any way He wants to. He can do so in a fiery explosion as He did with Tommy Smoak, or He can speak in a still small voice as He did to Elijah (1 Ki. 19:12). There is a God, however, and I am convinced that He wants to communicate with us. Please turn off the TV, put away your cell phone, draw aside from the hustle and bustle of life and listen!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce