

Explosions We Have Known



As of 8:45 am Tuesday 11 September 2001,
all of the information contained herein is now obsolete.

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I'm telling you Mike, this guy walks into a small local area bank in Detroit, early one morning, and for no apparent reason opens fire with an assault rifle and murders four people - one outside the bank, three inside and finally shoots himself in the head and dies right then and there. The guy is only twenty three years old, not interested in robbing the bank, revenge or hatred for any of the victims, just doing what he did, like a robot. Makes you wonder what the hell is going on in this world, doesn't it?

Well, what's new about that, is Mike's reply? I can well imagine the horror, shock and anger of the families of those killed, but for everyone else the day after will be just another banking day. The only change will be the headline of the daily paper and the lead story on the evening's news programs. It has been happening in this country ever since the early fifties and has now found its way into other countries. Don't you remember the nut who walked into a school gymnasium last year in Dunblane, Scotland and murdered sixteen very young children, again with a military assault weapon. These dammed things were invented to defend a country against invaders, not for killing people in a bank or children playing in a gymnasium. These explosions of madness are now, more or less, expected at any time, any where. The problem is that they no longer shock society, or cause social or political outrage it is sad to say. It is a new phenomenon of social madness now loose in the world.

That's interesting Mike that you should use the word explosion to describe these seemingly senseless, monstrous assaults on innocent people. Explosion is usually not the word used to describe this type of killing, but when you said explosion, I though of bomb going off somewhere, or a natural gas leak which is ignited and explodes, usually demolishing the buildings around the leak and killing or injuring people. Explosion, eh! That fits. It certainly describes these attacks well; some deranged person suddenly, and without warning, explodes into a murdering maniac. Have you noticed that after the event, they are often described by neighbors and friends as nice, quiet people, never causing any real trouble for anyone in their lives, Reno said slowly. Explosion, that's the word. It has many meanings but these random attacks are certainly explosions.

Mike, Reno, Gus and Earl are sitting in the club house bar of the Mountain View Golf and Country Club, munching on pistachio nuts, sipping away at glasses of draught beer, waiting for the rest of the golfers to finish their afternoon final rounds of the day. They were first off the tee this afternoon and would wait here to hear all the details of the successes and the misfortunes of other foursomes. There are twenty four golfers from home, this year, the largest group they have had in the past five years. These five days of golf in North Carolina, have been an annual Spring Break journey for ten years now. The weather in mid March is not always ideal, but good enough to finish twenty seven holes a day, with or without jackets on. The group consists of seventeen teachers from St. Thomas High School, two priests from the school staff, and six invited guests. The course is a beautiful eighteen hole layout sheltered in the rolling hills of western North Carolina, a few miles from the Great Smoky Mountains. The meals are excellent, the rooms as comfortable as any motel, and it is only a seven-hour trip from home; so they simply settled in here for five days, going into the nearby city of Asheville only when newspapers or something else may be needed.

While waiting, Earl went back to the subject of explosions. He said it all started with the Chinese, or as some books now have it with Arabic science of mixing certain elements together and igniting this compound with a spark or heat from a flame in order to cause a bursting of potential energy outwards. Saltpeter, charcoal and sulfur, when mixed and ignited came to be known to Europeans as black powder, or as it was named later, gunpowder, when first used in crude pipes or guns designed to propel small lead or steel pellets. Earl taught senior level history at St. Thomas, and used this history of gun powder as an introduction to the famous Gun Powder Plot episode of English History. Guy Fawkes and four co-conspirators were involved in a conspiracy to blow up Parliament and in so doing, kill the King, James, his queen and son, using twenty barrels of gun powder hidden in a cellar under the palace building. The plot failed but has become part of England's lore and history. Guns were first used in warfare in the fourteenth century. Up to then all killing had to be done face-to-face with the enemy, or as the Italians say, *mano a mano*. Strength, skills and a cunning mind were needed to survive a battle and defeat the enemy. Today, six centuries later, this same killing, magnified several thousand times, can be carried out by the push of a button, thousands of miles from the intended victims; hard to believe, Earl said as he ended his short history on black powder.

Gus, a travel agent for the past fifteen years, said that when he hears the word explosion, he automatically thinks of the two Atom Bombs which exploded over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. He visited both these cities recently, while working out the detail of an Asian Tour package his company was putting together. He spent time at each of the bombing sites and at the memorials erected to the historical recording of these attacks and to the memory of the over one hundred thousand innocent civilians who had died, or rather were incinerated or possibly vaporized along with tens of thousands more who were maimed and injured. This all took place in only a few seconds of history's time. Very few people, to this day, properly understand the magnitude of these outbursts of energy over Japan, which since then, have been dwarfed by larger and more powerful weapons from the same family of science. He read in a Detroit paper a few months ago, of a columnist being invited to have lunch aboard the USS Michigan, a Trident class submarine, which carries a payload of two dozen intercontinental ballistic missiles. As the columnist puts it "they were just sitting there waiting for someone to push a button so they can take off and blow up part of the world." He went on to explain in the article that there are seventeen other missile submarines of this class, "creeping around in the world's oceans every day of the year." And then there is SAC, Gus continued, America's Strategic Air Command's defense program of continuous daily flights of nuclear bombers patrolling the skies of the world with their deadly payload of atomic bombs on board. Most people do not take any notice of their presence in the skies, as their cruising altitude is so high the aircraft is hard to see with the naked eye; only their telltale vapor trails are seen but not understood. Who is the enemy in this scenario; what are these expensive and explosive activities all about, Gus questioned. He laughed a little and said that if another war breaks out, the safest place to be may be in the military. Certainly these weapons are designed for the mass destruction of entire civilizations, not for any military strategy of pinpoint bombing raids on military targets. What about the Oklahoma Federal Government Building bombing two years ago, Reno offered, as another case of explosives being used to kill innocent civilians. Can you believe that the killing of 168 people and injuring 500 more, and the creation of that much destruction and

panic is the work of one or two people using a rented truck and standard farming chemicals. Who and why would anyone become so angry at their government as to create this plan and carry it out; it now looks like American citizens are responsible for this human carnage, rather than foreigners hostile to America. And what about

Just then four smiling happy golfers came into the bar and pulled up a nearby table to make a table for eight, and pleaded with the waitress to quicken her steps to bring another two pitchers of beer and enough peanuts and chips to go around. Barry Armstrong was grinning from ear-to-ear and began to tell the details of his back nine score of 43, which is his personal low score on these nine holes where every tee area is either far above or far below the targeted greens. He celebrated by paying for the beer and the nuts, which had just been set down in front of the group of eight. Others began to come in and soon the bar area was full of tired but happy golfers. The entire complement of twenty four golfer vacationers were now in and golf was over for another day. This was their second day here, another group of four were due to arrive here later today, but there was no sign of their arrival yet. It was now close to five o'clock and the eastern sky was becoming cloudy and dark. A picturesque dairy farm with a large herd of Jersey cattle took up much of the area at the eastern end of the road leading up to the club house and pro shop, and lodge. Early finishers were now ready to shower and to rest a bit before supper hour. They will rejoin everyone in the dining room at six thirty for supper.

Earl and Reno shared a room in the lodge, Mike and Gus had another. While showering and shaving Mike and Gus continued to discuss this explosion idea, which Reno had triggered earlier in the afternoon. They both thought that it would be a good discussion topic tonight at the open bar session held each night in Father Thompson's room. Father Vince Thompson and Father Alton Quinn shared a larger room than most, as a Mass was celebrated there each morning at eight and then became a common room for the entire group each evening at nine. The bar was financed with a fund of contributions of ten dollars per golfer on the first day of their arrival. Usually this funding is greater than what is required to establish an amply stocked bar; whatever is left over is given to the waitresses in the dining room and to the staff of the lodge, the last day of their stay.

Reverend Father V. Thompson, C.S.B. is a priest of the teaching and pastoral order of the Congregation of St. Basil; they established St. Thomas High School in 1912. He is now in his thirtieth year of ordination and teaching, has a Doctorate in Classical Languages and Literature and is now serving as a Department Head at St. Thomas. Previously he was the school's principal, after assignments in Rochester, New York, and Houston, Texas. He was born and raised in Toronto, and was ordained there in 1967. He is better known for his former hockey skills than for his present golfing abilities, but he has learned to play the game somewhat better since he joined the teacher's group in their first year of coming south to North Carolina. He now uses a cart on the up and down back nine holes; but still walks with the best of them on the front nine. He knows that he has taken up the game too late in life to ever come close to challenging par, but he gives it his best effort each and every time out. He seldom golfs at any other time of the year. Once in a while he has the nasty thought that if only he had a sheet of ice, a hockey stick and a pair of skates, he would show these guys what a real game is all about, even at his age. To him golf is a nice, well-mannered, social event rather than a sport that required strength, skills, stamina and teamwork, but he prefers this Spring Break mini vacation to any other he could think of. His true love is to travel to Europe and the Middle East during his summer vacation. This coming summer will be somewhat different as he has been invited to visit a Basilian Novitiate in Medellin, Columbia. He has not travelled to South America and was looking forward to the trip to see the Basilian work being done there, and to visit Brazil and Argentina, as a tourist, for two weeks. Father Alton Quinn C.S.B., does not golf. He has never learned the game, and owns no golf equipment, but he has made the trip for the past five years simply to enjoy walking the area surrounding the golf course. He suffers from a mild heart condition, which rules out any strenuous physical exercise, but brisk walking exercise is part of his therapy. He finds back roads, to walk, which sooner or later lead into areas of the golf course property, where he often leaves the woods and appears on the fairways to join a foursome playing that particular hole and follows along with them until another road opens up to him. He no longer teaches in a classroom at St. Thomas. He is director of their Guidance and Discipline Departments and has administrative duties related to the school's hockey, baseball, basketball, football and

volleyball programs. He is a winner; everyone is on his side, a testimony to his sincerity and humility.

Reno and Earl left their room, and took a short walk around the club house and the proshop and ended up five minutes later in the dining room, where two long banquet type tables were set up with twelve places each. Most of the fellows were seated when they walked in and sat down with Fr. Thompson, Gus, Mike, and the other guests, who had just arrived about an hour ago. They were introduced to this new group, and by the end of supper everyone knew each other on a first name basis. The newcomers were younger than Earl's group. They had arrived in style in a spanking new Jaguar which was owned by Sheldon Whiteside, a dentist from Birmingham, Michigan. As always the supper was excellent, enjoyed by everyone. About eight o'clock, after coffee and dessert, the dining room began to clear out and they all retreated to their rooms to relax and for some to wait for tonight's session at Thompson's bar, as the common room was named.

Reno, Earl, Gus, and Mike were all born in the same decade and in the same neighborhood and have enjoyed a life long friendship. Gus owns and operates two travel agencies, Mike is an automotive engineer and Reno works in the insurance business. All were near to retirement age, but no one had taken that step yet, maybe four or five years from now.

Well, it is now bar time. When they arrived they found the room half full, about eight or ten guys, serving themselves at a long table, which now served as the bar and in the mornings served as the altar for the liturgy. It was a fold-a-way table, sturdy but easily folded and placed against the wall when not in use. Earl fixed a rye and water for himself, others were drinking American bourbon which they now preferred during these trips south. The talk around the room was concerned with the coming National Hockey League playoffs, the final four college teams of the NCAA basketball tournament, which this year has North Carolina University remaining in the semifinals, and some very early baseball talk coming out of the Florida spring training camps. Earl went over to where Father Thompson and a few others were talking hockey, especially the possibility of this being the last season for Mario Lemieux, the game's premier player and the star of the Pittsburgh Penguins. Someone then asked about Canada's chances at the 1998 Olympic games in Japan, which for the first time will allow professional hockey players to compete for the Gold Medal of Hockey. Everyone had their own ideas of what players should be selected and invited to Canada's training camp. In doing so most expressed an uncertainty as to whether Canada would win the tournament and the Gold Medal. This uncertainty seemed to be due to a decline of Canadian hockey talents, when compared to the now proven excellence of hockey teams from the United States, Sweden, Russia, Czechoslovakia, and Finland. Even Germany, France, Poland and Italy are now sending vastly improved teams to compete in international hockey tournaments. It seems that the Gold Medal for hockey no longer belonged to Canada as an uncontested right. This uncertainty led one of the younger teachers to ask Father Thompson if he remembers the 1972 NHL-Soviet Series, which created a new era of international hockey; especially the night of the first game of the eight game series, played in Montreal in September of 1972. Remember it? He would never forget it, he answered! Neither will a whole generation of Russian and Canadian hockey fans. He emphasized it was the most exciting, thrilling and dramatic sports event he has ever experienced in his life. Four games in Canada, and four final games in Moscow. Canadians were expected to win the series handily. All of Canada's experts anticipated an easy victory for Canada, even predicting an eight game sweep of the series; after all this was our game and who were these Russians anyway to have enough confidence and courage to take on an all-star team of our very best professional hockey players. Pre-tournament scouting reports, turned into the National Hockey League's management team, suggested that the Russians were good, but lacked basic professional level hockey skills from the goal crease out. The only voice in disagreement with this analysis was that of another Basilian priest, Father David Bauer, who as the coach of several nonprofessional hockey teams, had seen these Russians play in action in international tournaments, and knew how well they could play and of what they were capable. But he was not part of the NHL brain trust for this series and as such was not given an ear by NHL personnel. Father Thompson, along with most other Basilians in the Toronto area, that September night were gathered around the television set at Michael Powers High School and watched in amazement as the Soviets rebounded from an early two goal first period deficit to skate, pass, and shoot their way to a 7 to 3 victory, completely dominating the Canadians in all the fundamental skills of the game. The game was carried by the National Network of the

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and was watched by millions of Canadian hockey fans and by those who only knew that something important was going on, but knew very little about the game itself. Canada was in a state of shock. The players and management were embarrassed. Total disbelief, as if a bomb had gone off in their midst. Little did they know that one more victory and a tie game would go to the Soviets, before the teams left for the final four games in Moscow. Canada did go on to win the series, after suffering through three exciting consecutive late game wins, the eighth and final game was won by Canada with thirty four seconds remaining in regulation time. This blow to Canada's hockey supremacy was devastating, much like the aftermath of an explosion. There's that word again, Reno thought to himself. He then gave Father Thompson and the others a brief outline of the discussion he, Earl, Mike and Gus had earlier in the club house. By the time they finished talking about this historic hockey battle, it was very close to eleven, closing time for the bar, when all drinks must be finished and the glasses washed for the next day and the table cleared and put in place for tomorrow's Mass. Everyone went to their rooms and prepared themselves for tomorrow's promise of warmer, sunny weather; a full day of golf in the lush scenic foothills of the Smoky Mountains.

Father Thompson began his Wednesday morning Mass exactly at eight o'clock and once again made his way through the ancient, sacred prayers and rituals, slightly faster than his normal style of celebration. He greeted each of those gathered with his liturgical greeting of peace, blessed the gifts of bread and wine, distributed Eucharist and shortly after began to remove his morning vestments. He told Father Quinn, who had assisted at the Mass, that he was taking the ten minute drive to Ashville and would return in good time for his scheduled tee time of ten o'clock.

He arrived at the Ashville Public Library, a few minutes after they opened for the day, and went directly to their collection of dictionaries. He found what he was looking for; a volume of the Unabridged Random House Dictionary of the English Language. Turning to the gold leafed tab, he located the correct page on which he found the etymological root of the word "explode". Originally Latin, exploder used when Romans wanted to drive off a stage, actors or other performers with laughter, hissing, and sometimes clapping of their hands - a noisy disapproval of a performance. Its modern usage of "burst forth with sudden violence from an internal energy," was given as circa 1611, which certainly agreed with Earl's dating of the early gun uses of black powder. Interesting he thought as he turned away from the library and headed back to the golf club, how different times and people use the same linguistic symbol to describe two very dissimilar human responses to a set of given conditions.

He arrived at the club in good time, had a chance to take a few practice swings with his driver wood, loosening up the muscles, and went over to the first tee area and met his threesome for the day; Reno, Gus, and Sheldon. Sheldon was the first to hit. Wow can this guy golf, he drove it a mile and as straight as a die. He would need only a five iron to reach the first green on his second shot. After this cannon shot, the next three drives were fair to halfway decent. So they started a long day of playing twenty seven holes of golf. All in all, they had a good time, watching each other's shots in case some were headed for the line of trees which lined every hole on the course. The weather was perfect, by noon they were playing in just shirts, instead of sweaters as they had started. Surprisingly, Father Thompson was hitting and putting better than he could ever remember doing. Maybe it was that old hockey competitiveness of his coming back, trying at least to emulate Sheldon's swing and skills.

At the end of the golf day, when they added their score cards, Vince Thompson did exactly as he thought he was doing; he shot a 47 on the front nine and a 54 on the back nine; both life time lows. He must of tired on his final nine of the day as he took eight more shots than he needed this morning. The club house bar was full when they came in shortly before four o'clock. His low score this morning was the talk of the bar. Congratulations came from everyone. He laughed a little to himself as he knew that his unlikely low score this morning was the result of two very lucky putts and two decent chip shots to the green.

In his room that night, he explained to the "explosion gang" the etymological information he had found at the library this morning. Hard to figure isn't it asked Earl. I guess the Romans had no idea

of a device which could possibly contain the power and the potential to blow apart anything close to the source of power. They certainly could have used a little of this explosive power in their ambitious civil and military pursuits, such as building roads, mining sulfur in Sicily and in other areas of empire building, which seemed to be on their agenda most of the time. They knew only the natural powers of explosions and eruptions, as there were many volcanoes in their areas of influence, in fact these were named after their god of fire, Vulcan. It is like the Arabic numbers we now use, then unknown to the Romans, which has given us the zero to play around with so that we can now count things in the thousands, millions, billions and now even the trillions. Nothing in the Roman world needed such a large numbering system; they handled everything quite well with their roman numerals scheme of things.

Mike said that he can think of one player in a drama, who was eliminated from the stage by the use of an explosion or as the Romans had it exexploderthe assassination of John F. Kennedy. He remembers that day very clearly; Dallas, Texas, Friday, November 22, 1963, just before his normal noon lunch time. He remembers the three rifle shots that blew apart the President's head, as sure as if a bomb had done this work of destruction. These bullets had done their malevolent work perfectly. It was one way of getting rid of a player who strays from the script and begins to add his own version of the scheme of things as the play progressed. He went on to explain that he had just started to work, after his graduation as an engineer, in the auto industry in May of that year and was in the engine plant installing a production line washer that Friday with a crew of ten men. They were scheduled to finish the installation that day so they decided to work through lunch to finish their work before the afternoon shift started. They were about to finish and to clean up when the first news of the shooting began to circulate in the plant. At first they were all stunned and shocked, but continued to work at this installation; maybe they thought it was only a minor injury. They finished their work around two o'clock and went immediately to the Marigold Tavern, around the corner from the plant gate, to learn what they could from television reports and at the same time gets something to eat. The news was all bad, very bad; surgery for the President, panic for the country. The waiters and the cooks were too interested in the news to prepare anything, Mike and his crew ordered chips and other snack food instead of their regular meals. This is bad, very bad Mike remembers thinking. Who would want to do such a thing to him? Every news report was harder to take than the previous report. He was finished work at three thirty that afternoon. He cleared his desk a little early, and left immediately for home. When he arrived everyone was crying, neighbors were in the streets, on their porches, all in a state of complete disbelief, trying in vain to understand these events. The news broke a short while before Mike arrived, that the President had died. How does something like this happen, Mike kept asking himself. From that moment on, everyone in America and the rest of the world sat close to their television sets, for three days, watching the pageantry, the drama and the pain of loss unfold, especially the bizarre and surrealistic killing of Lee Harvey Oswald, live on television, noon on Sunday. The greatest of all Greek tragedies ever conceived paled in the light of this unscripted tragedy, which seemed to be written, as it was unfolding, by an unknown author.

The next half hour was taken by each of the group in turn, telling what he was doing and where he was at that fateful Friday afternoon. A few only listened as they were yet to be born in 1963, or were too young to understand what was occurring on television. Everyone by now has read reams of details of this assassination and most have seen the film JFK, created by Oliver Stone. Again Mike took the lead on this story by stating that he found it hard to believe that anyone had the skill, the nerve and the cool to get off three high powered bullets and in doing so hit his target, the head of President Kennedy, with each shot, which followed the first in quick succession, although the limousine was moving and so was the President's head, after the first bullet hit home. Mike also questioned the reason he has never found in any book or seen on any television documentary, the official interrogation records of the Dallas Police Department, concerned with this crime. They had Oswald in their custody for nearly two full days and surely must have used all of their interrogation skills during this time, in an effort to develop a scenario of his activities and motives in this world wide drama taking place in their city. What did he tell them, in those two days of his arrest, concerning his innocence or guilt, and most importantly, his motive for murdering the President. Others agreed that they also had never seen or heard any interrogation report, as to what Oswald said or did not say while in custody. The only thing anyone could remember him saying on camera

was, "I never killed anybody."

How about the murders of his brother Robert and that of Dr. Martin Luther King, asked Reno? One was enough, more than enough for a nation to take, but two more right on the heels of John's assassination; it was a little too much tragedy for a while. Although history is dotted with assassinations none will compare with these, as all three were covered in full detail by television cameras, which made them more immediate and meaningful to millions of viewers world wide. The sixties certainly was a troubled decade for Americans.

Father Quinn, usually a better listener than a story teller, continued the saga of the sixties by telling of his experience, while stationed at Assumption High School in Windsor, Ontario, in the summer of 1967. Windsor is directly across from downtown Detroit, Michigan; only the Detroit River separates the two cities. It took only a seemingly insignificant quarrel started by a police raid of an after hours bar in midtown Detroit, to explode into a full scale, early morning race riot, which lasted for five days, took hundreds of lives, destroyed millions of dollars worth of property damage. Detroit's near west downtown section was on fire for most of this time. Everything was set ablaze, houses, businesses, churches, by angry Blacks who felt that the Detroit Police Department was a racist organization, and they wanted to put a stop to this unchallenged power. Quinn, along with many others from the school staff, each day on their spare periods, went to the foot of the Detroit River to watch from the safety of the Canadian shore, this devastation which appeared to be a never diminishing skyline of black, billowing smoke, destroying the main western residential area of Detroit. From television they could see close up views of the rioting, street gun battles and the looting of retail stores; the city was in the hands of the military and each television image showed the area of Detroit affected, as a war zone. National Guard troops were shooting at looters and some of the rioters in the streets and on the rooftops were returning the rifle fire. Firemen, trying to put out a few of the fires were being shot at by rioters. He could not remember the number of people killed during this riot, but he guessed in the hundreds. Calm and civil order did eventually return, but the scars of this anger, rage and revenge still remains a legacy of the city. That same summer this scene of urban chaos was repeated in Watts, California, Washington D.C., Chicago and Philadelphia.

Barry Armstrong mentioned that he had recently seen a televised interview of Carl Rowan, a noted Black American writer, now retired, who for many years was a syndicated columnist whose daily articles appeared in most of America's major newspapers. He was being interviewed regarding the recent publication of his new book *The Coming Race War in America*. Barry emphasized that Mr. Rowan is not a racial radical or an exploiter of publishing, and is not given to broad sweeping opinions, but rather a respected and very experienced writer and observer of American life. In his extrapolation of current racial moods and undercurrent tensions, Mr. Rowan clearly stated that, he is certain that America will experience another long hot summer, somewhere, sometime, probably sooner than later, which will make the riots of the late 1960s seem like a rehearsal by comparison. Mike added that the morning they left Detroit for North Carolina, the morning *Free Press* published a report that the Detroit Police Department confiscated three thousand guns and 1996. These were seized because they were used in some sort of crime. Scary stuff, he ended. No one doubted this possibility.

They were joined by Sheldon. He was listening to their discussion of the Detroit riots in the past; he told them that his father, worked as a real estate broker in Detroit for forty years of his life. He often told his family about the importance of the development of the Northland Shopping Center and what effect it had on the property values of Detroit's real estate market. The J.L. Hudson Department store, one of America's largest department stores, announced in 1950 that they were planning a large new shopping center in the Woodward Avenue and Nine Mile Road area of Detroit, which in 1950 was a long way from downtown Detroit. The Northland Center was to be the largest and the first of its kind in the United States. His father noticed, a few years after its opening, that this decision was the turning point in Detroit's downtown eventual demise. New suburbs were springing up in the western and the eastern areas of the Detroit Metropolitan area, and as they did, so did additional shopping centers, all based on the original Northland model. The huge downtown flagship Hudson's stores was closed eventually, taking down with it hundreds of smaller retail stores, theatres and hotels. His father saw this as a social and economic revolution causing the death of

America's downtown shopping habits and changing most of the core area of Detroit, and other major cities, into vast areas of economic and social blight, which soon gave way to the introduction of crime, unemployment and social turmoil. So on this note of possible racial and civil unrest and the disturbing history of urban decay, they ended the night just in time to clean up the room and the bar, put away the table for another day, and went to their rooms. Thursday morning came bright and warm at seven thirty, when Reno awoke. He shook Earl, told him the time and began to wash up and shave for the day; they then left for Father Thompson's morning Mass. He, Earl, Gus and Mike were leaving for home today, after playing a final eighteen holes of golf. They planned to have light lunch at the bar and start for home before two o'clock this afternoon. They all wanted to arrive home at a decent hour. This morning the usual ten or twelve fellows were at Mass, who joined together in the dining room after Mass for a light breakfast, before the first tee time of nine o'clock.

The day went well; it was much warmer than it had been the past three days, the grass was much greener than when they arrived on Sunday afternoon. It showed signs of early spring's yellowish green, rather than the hard green it would take on in the next day or two. Early spring grass not only looked beautiful, it also smelled better than older grass. When they finished their eighteen holes they went to the club bar, and ordered a sandwich lunch with their glass of beer. Before they finished eating, all the other golfers came in from their early rounds of the course, which gave Reno, Mike, Earl and Gus a chance to say goodbye to each one and to express their thanks to Fathers Thompson and Quinn for their kind invitation to join the Spring Break for the past three days. They went to their rooms, packed their clothing and met in the parking lot where Gus was waiting with his minivan. They loaded up their golf clubs and their bags and pulled out of the club parking lot just before two o'clock; ready for the seven hour trip home. They headed for Knoxville, Tennessee, where they will pick up interstate highway I-75 North, after a scenic trip through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. They would drive until they were in Ohio, past Cincinnati, for another light lunch and a drink, before taking off on the final stretch of road home.

They were all rather quiet today, as one usually is after a pleasant and enjoyable event where talking is usually the order of the day. While riding, their thoughts went back to the discussions they had had about explosions and each made a few comments about each of the cases mentioned at Thompson's bar. Other than that, most of the talk was about golf, the friends they had made there, and the expectation of returning next year. Their final discussion about explosions was to agree that there was enough black powder and nuclear power now available to assure that the world may never again be a safe place to live for thousands, if not millions of people. Anywhere, at any time, one of these potential explosives can go off, or a nice friendly neighbor can suddenly explode into a murderous maniac.

Finally, they saw their exit from I-75. As he drove off the exit ramp Gus turned on the car radio. It was nine o'clock; time for a ten minute recap of the day's national, international news, sport scores and the weather, each hour on the hour. The reader started with political news stories from Washington, troubling financial news from New York, rioting and bombings in the Middle East's Hebron area of Israel, the upcoming trial of the alleged Oklahoma City bombing suspects, and finally Rome's preparations for next week's celebrations of Holy Week and Easter Sunday, which led to an ironic story from Yemen. Mohammed Ahmad Misleh, 48, of Sanaa Yemen, was found guilty today, of opening fire, with an assault rifle, on hundreds of children lined up before morning classes, killing four children and two teachers. The court ruled he would be executed by firing squad and his body nailed to a cross for three days, near the site where he shot the children and the teachers. Gus, did not wait for the sport scores and the weather, he turned the radio off. No one said a thing.

Soon they were at the high school parking lot where their cars were parked and waiting. After unloading the minivan, saying good bye to each other, they headed for their own homes, anxious to find their families safe and sound. It was now nearly ten o'clock, just in time for the ten o'clock news program, maybe with news of another bombing or explosion. It is no longer a rare news item.