

## Cottonwood Spring

### General Logan's Order

**Jase delivers the opening address at the Decoration Day ceremony. Despite some difficult, with Danny's assistance, he does a commendable job.**

During the week before Decoration Day, Danny had heard me rehearse my reading of *General Logan's Order* so many times, he became bored. As a diversion, he decided to time me, using the kitchen clock. He did this twenty-three times. On average, my delivery time was three minutes and 14 seconds. On a whim, he counted the number of words in the order. There were 486. Finally he calculated the words-per-minute.

"Amazing! It came out exactly 150! Did you realize you talked 150 words a minute, Jase?"

That's how bad it got.

On the other hand, because I was so familiar with the content, I was relaxed and confident of doing a good job. That was before Mr. Hornbeck started to get nervous on my behalf.

"Jase, we don't have a public-address system. You'll have to speak very loudly to be heard in the back rows -- especially when the wind's gusty like it's been off and on all day."

"I'll do my very best, Mr. Hornbeck."

Until his admonishment, my only concern was my reading. But he had added the loudness of my voice and possible gusts of wind to my list. Just what I needed, right before my presentation.

When he finally took the podium, Mr. Hornbeck looked impressive in his neatly pressed VFW uniform. In his flattering introduction, he summarized my acts of courage with Danny over the previous year and the widespread recognition we had received from the press, world leaders, and the public at large.

"For the reading of *General Logan's Order*, please welcome Jase Addison." After shaking my hand, he turned the podium over to me. I laid down my copy of the order and turned my attention to the audience.

That's when it hit me.

Hundreds of people were staring right at me. Suddenly I felt a tremendous pressure on my temples. My chest and my throat simultaneously tightened. Panic-stricken, I looked down at Danny who evidently sensed what was happening. Without missing a beat, he shot me a wink and a grin.

Instantly the spell was broken.

I took a deep breath, looked down at my paper, and began reading. "General Order No. 11 -- Headquarters, Grand Army of the Republic -- Washington, D.C. -- May 5, 1868.

"Article One. The 30th day of May, 1868, is --."

In response to Mr. Hornbeck's distracting motions, I stopped. With his mouth wide open, he was frantically waving his hand between his chest and his chin. Having gotten my attention, he ceased gesturing and whispered, "Louder!"

I turned up the volume.

" -- designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village, and hamlet churchyard in the land.

He seemed satisfied.

In this observance no form or ceremony is prescribed, but posts and comrades will in their own way arrange such fitting services and testimonials of respect as circumstances may permit."

Suddenly a powerful gust of wind struck me in the chest. Its force pushed me a step backwards. The only copy of *General Logan's Order* shot over my head on its way skyward. I watched as the paper disappeared beyond the row of tall elm trees, lining the perimeter of the square.

When I turned back to my audience, every face wore an expression of sympathy and concern. In desperation, I looked at Danny, who rescued me again.

"We are organized, comrades, as our regulations tell us, for the purpose, among other things, 'of preserving and strengthening those kind and fraternal feelings which have bound together the soldiers, sailors, and marines who united to suppress the late rebellion.' What can aid more to assure --."

By his fourth memorized word, I had joined him. Together we recited the remaining words of *General Logan's Order*.

The applause was deafening. Of course, Danny stood and bowed from the waist.

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