

12-3-1981

TO: Ken Follett  
FROM: Merv Stauffer  
SUBJECT: Emotions I felt at various times during the rescue.

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My wife has often said that when a crisis develops and I become totally immersed in seeing it through, I function as a machine--without any emotion. That really is not true. I do try to suppress any emotion I feel. I have found that if I am successful in doing this, I can function more effectively. Nevertheless, in this case, I did experience various emotions.

1. December, 1978, Istanbul, Turkey: It was a difficult decision to order an evacuation. We felt that the people wanted to stay in their homes--especially with the holidays approaching; however, an evacuation was ordered. When Tom Marquez and I arrived in Istanbul in preparation for the evacuation of non-essential personnel and dependents, I expected the prevailing attitude to be one of irritation that the company had insisted on an evacuation. I was very surprised to find that the prevailing attitude was, "thank goodness, the company got us out of there." The surprise turned to a feeling of thankfulness in that the evacuation was the correct decision.
2. December, 1978: Disbelief! When informed of the arrest of Bill and Paul, I just couldn't believe it. Disbelief was quickly replaced by a feeling of "Let's get on with it. Let's get them out."
3. January 2, 1979: In meeting the Colonel at the airport, I sensed enjoyment--enjoyment at being with him again. This was always the case. No matter what the situation was, I enjoyed being with the Colonel.
4. January 2-10, 1979: As the team trained and as we prepared for their departure from the U.S., I had mixed feelings regarding the mission.
  - a. Hope--Hope that the team would not be needed. Hope that Bill and Paul would be freed by other means.

- b. Anxiousness--Would security be breached? Would these men successfully return from the mission? Could I keep their wives "satisfied" with half-truths while the men were out of the country.
  - c. Yet, confident--The Colonel was in charge. Ross was committed to the principle that the team would only be used as a last resort; but, if used, the Colonel was in charge. The Colonel was committed to action only as a last resort; and, then only if there was a 95% chance of success.
5. January 10 - February 10, 1979: The biggest single emotional feeling during the "waiting-in-place" phase was frustration. So many negotiations were taking place and so many influential people were contacted with the anticipation release could be obtained. Results were negative at every turn.
6. February 11, 1979: Elation, happiness, euphoria. They are out of jail--wonderful, wonderful, wonderful. This emotional high was quickly suppressed by the obvious--they are still in Iran and must escape the Iranian border.
7. February 12 - February 17, 1979:
- a. Hesitation and fear--for over a month, I had, at a minimum, talked with Jay Coburn daily. The last conversation I had with him before the team left on the drive overland was highly emotional for me. I knew that the next time I would talk to him, he would be in Turkey; but, so much could go wrong before then. I really didn't want to disconnect from that call--that was hesitation and perhaps a bit of fear (of the unknown). On the other hand, I wanted him to hang up and get on with it. The time for escape was now.
  - b. Total anger--The team was on its way out overland. We could not communicate with them. We had no way of knowing the status of their safety until they reached the border. At that precise time, the Dallas Times Herald began running front page headlines and stories regarding the plight of Bill and Paul, including the fact

they were reported to be going overland to Turkey. At a time when many unfriendly Iranians were located in the Metroplex and at a time when it was simple to make a phone call to Iran, the paper demonstrated total disregard for the lives of Bill, Paul and other team members in their quest to sell newspapers. This attitude was the basis for my emotion of total anger towards the paper, the reporters involved, and the paper's executives who so callously thumbed their noses at our plea to delay until the team had arrived safely in Turkey.

c. Relief and joy--Success! The "dirty group" made it to Turkey! Success! The "clean group" made it to Frankfurt.

8. February 18, 1979: Once again, Euphoria, Elation, Absolute Joy! They were safely home in Dallas. Words cannot express the joy experienced when they arrived home.

MLS

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