
Chapter Twenty Nine

Great Man – Greg Morgan

My brother Greg has a ton of potential. This story is proof of that – given the right circumstances – he is a great man. I’ve always known this about him. I could tell you a dozen stories from when we were kids, about my brother Greg stepping up in a big game (usually of the pick up variety – as Greg eschews organized sport – too many rules and too much practice I think.) This article is an abstract of an article Greg wrote for the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties (NAIOP), an organization of real estate professionals – of which Greg is one.

What Happens When the Unthinkable Happens?

by Gregory Morgan

How can we be ready for these unthinkable random acts? How can we prepare our buildings for a lone gunman on a unique mission of revenge as unpredictable as the man who has planned it? How do we then recover from the carnage and the pain?

At 12:10 p.m. one January Wednesday afternoon in Tampa, Florida, one of these incidents occurred in a building we managed. Returning to the office for a brief 30-minute lunch, a break from a weeklong training session, I found myself running through the mail while consuming a quick turkey sandwich. From the two-way radio perched on my secretary’s desk, we heard the words “security to base, shots fired in the café, people are down.” My secretary rushed to her desk and asked the security officer to repeat the message. The message was the same. I asked her to find out if they knew where the gunman was and where the weapon was. The officer responded that the gunman was at large and he was unaware of the whereabouts of the weapon. We called down to the café and asked if they knew where the weapon was. The café employee said that the gun

was on the counter. My secretary called 911, while the assistant property manager and I ran down five flights of stairs to a horrifying sight.

Screaming, crying and confusion prevailed as we walked past the café entrance, then into the café. I could not believe my eyes. Five bodies were strewn across the café floor, two clearly dead from the coloring of one and a protruding bump containing a bullet on the other's forehead. Surprisingly, a third victim, with a star-like wound in his head, was making sounds and asking for help. Another was doing fine, then stopped breathing.

One man assisting on the scene shouted, asking if anyone knew CPR. As he pumped the heart, I administered mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. After several breaths, it appeared for a moment that this man would come back. He did not. We were not aware that from the front view we had of the man lying on his back, that he had suffered several bullet wounds to the chest, through his back. I found my eyes affixed to the wedding ring on the man's hand, five feet in front of me, the man with the star-like wound. I had visions of his wife and kids, although I had never met him.

When life left the eyes of the man we tried to save, my faith in God blossomed. I felt a peaceful yet powerful wind rush through the shutters of the blown-out floor-to-ceiling pane of glass. The spirit of God had come to take this man's spirit away. A situation of blood and terror, even for just a moment, had turned to a peaceful place of revelation for me.

Then the police and paramedics arrived. They did a quick triage scan to decide where to begin. One woman continued to cry for help along the glass. She was skipped for immediate care because of her apparent favorable condition. The paramedics chose to focus on the man with the star-shaped wound in his head, followed by the woman with the protruding bullet in her forehead. They chose the man with the star wound because even though it was an awful sight, he continued to make sounds and appeared lucid.

After several minutes stabilizing this man, moving him to a stretcher and taking him away, the paramedics moved to help the woman with the bump on her head containing the bullet. They stabilized her, she was breathing fine, and moved her to a stretcher and off to the hospital.

The following day we learned that the man with the star-shaped wound died soon after arriving at the hospital and the woman with the bullet protruding from the center of her forehead, lived. The bullet had apparently entered from the rear of her skull and then slid around the circumference of her skull and exited through her eye socket, causing minor damage. The woman soon returned to work and though she experienced some paralysis, she resumed a normal life.

After the paramedics and police team arrived on site, the building was locked off at the street and no one was permitted in or out. As the police instructed, we made announcements over the emergency loudspeaker system for anyone and everyone in the building to lock all doors and remain in their office suites away from the doors. The gunman had not been seen leaving the building, and although one handgun was left behind, eyewitnesses reported that the gunman had at least two firearms. The mood in the building was one of fear and deep concern.

Our job as building owner and manager was to listen and respond to anything and everything that the Tampa Police Department team administered. In this time of crisis, it's our only job.

Frightening experience. But you gotta love a guy who can step up in a situation like that. Like the countless times I've witnessed Greg make the key basket, an incredible catch or fake me out at the fence in our front yard for a touchdown, Greg just has a knack. Incredible potential. I have no idea what it is...but Greg has it.