



# ASSIST's Helping Hand Newsletter

Terrorism Survivors Helping Survivors

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2024

## Blind Men and the Elephant

By Worley (Lee) Reed

ASSIST is dedicated to helping injured survivors of terrorism with legal, medical and financial assistance based on available organizational funds. ASSIST endeavors to fill the gap between government entitlements and real need.

The American Society for the Support of Injured Survivors of Terrorism, Inc. Newsletter is published quarterly at Lake Wales, FL. The Chief Editor is Bret W Reed, Administrative Officer.

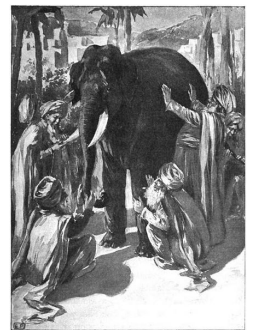
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Please send correspondence to ASSIST, 4371 Dinner Lake Blvd, Lake Wales, Florida 33859-2135

When a person witnesses an event, they sometime believe that their version of the event is the absolute and complete truth. However, the experience of law enforcement and the justice system is that this is only what they experienced. It is usually not a complete story. We will use the parable of *Blind Men and the Elephant* to illustrate the problem.

“The parable of the blind men and an elephant is a story of a group of blind men who have never come across an elephant before and who learn and imagine what the elephant is like by touching it. Each blind man feels a different part of the animal's body, but only one

part, such as the side or the tusk. They then describe the animal based on their limited experience and their descriptions of the elephant are different from each other. In some versions, they come to suspect that the other person is dishonest, and they come to blows. The moral of the parable is that humans tend to claim absolute truth based on their limited, subjective experience as they ignore other people's limited, subjective experiences which may be equally true. The parable originated in the ancient Indian subcontinent, from



Blind Men and the Elephant

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We are grateful to the US Department of Justice and the National Organization for Victims Assistance (NOVA) for their support and leadership in the area of victims' rights.

## Blind Men and the Elephant

(Continued)

where it has been widely diffused.” Blind men and an elephant - Wikipedia

In the past two issues of ASSIST Newsletters, I attempted to relate my experiences during the first day of the 1998 Nairobi Embassy Bombing. I want you to understand that this is only my experience. I do want and need our readers to write about their interaction with terrorism events. We want a complete picture of what terrorism victims go through in an attack. The more terrorism survivors tell us about what happened to them, the more we understand about the terrorism victim experience.

When you write about your terrorism event, please include a summary of your work and educational experiences. This permits the reader to understand the motives of your actions and observations. I have included my background in the last two episodes for the same reason. Please do not consider it boasting since it does give the reader insight into your feelings and actions. In my case, my education and experiences are about average for the US Foreign Service.

Please take our request seriously. All our readers want and need to read your story. We also will consider accepting anonymous articles if they meet minimum standards for publication. ◇

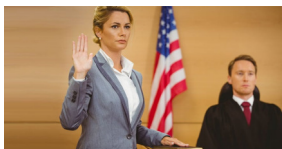
### Nairobi - The First Day

(Continued)

By Worley (Lee) Reed

As an infantry company commander, I told my soldiers that when they swore this oath, they voluntarily lowered the value of their own life from 100 percent to 99 percent. I instructed them to fight to protect the 99 percent at all costs, but in a very desperate situations with no other options, when the choice is between saving yourself or another American; you must choose to save the other person. This is the reason the American military is impossible to defeat. We are bound together under this oath. Additionally, bravery and heroism are easy to understand. They do not spring from a strange understrength or power. They come from a deep love for our Country and the person standing next to you. The firm belief that other Americans lives are more valuable than our own lives. How could an army of slaves or dictator's drones compete with our soldiers / diplomats? We do not swear allegiance to a dictator or any other leader. We swear a solemn oath to our Constitution (each other). The SRT (Search and Rescue Team) entered the broken Embassy to save Americans and our guests who were in serious trouble. The fact they were risking their own lives was less important to them.

The SRT had no available search and rescue equipment, so we did as the US Marine Slogan says "Innovate, Adapt and Overcome." We raided my basement workshop for hand tools such as hammers, crowbars, etc. When we did not have stretchers to carry the wounded, we used blown-down office doors. We needed a way to mark the sections of the building where we had already searched for victims, so we found lipstick in



## Nairobi—The First Day (Continued)

Page 3

the RSO secretary's desk. The Embassy doctor found paper face masks late in the afternoon, so we used them to attempt to control the toxic air. Anything we needed, we either found it or devised a substitute item.

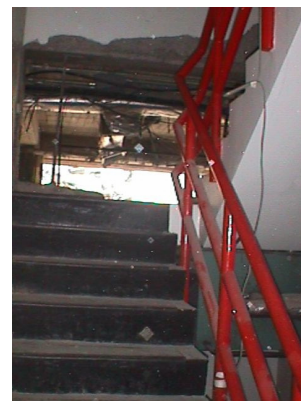
Most of the Embassy office doors were equipped with Unican Series 1000 door-knob / combination locks that initially blocked our access to the offices. We used small sledgehammers to knock a hole above the lock so we could reach through the door to unlock it using the internal doorknob. There were also S&G combination door locks on some doors. We either used the method above, or we used hammers to completely remove the lock from the door.

As previously stated, we started to dig in the rubble for survivors after we rescued the victims lying above the debris. We first attempted to generally locate where survivors would be probably buried using the survivors' memories of their locations. The Embassy floors were covered with rubble three to ten foot in depth. We started digging with our hand in the possible locations using a logical procedure. We cleared an area of about fifteen foot wide next to the windows by throwing the debris out of the window until we reached approximately three feet into the building. We would then move an additional three feet into the building by placing the new rubble into the space we just cleared next to the window. We used this ripple search method until we arrived at the opposite room wall. We marked the search

area with lipstick on the windows wall. When we finished with this section, we would mark the next fifteen-foot section on the window wall and repeat the above process.

While this seems simple to do, the debris ranged from one to two hundred pounds. Moving and digging through the rubble was very laborious. When we found a victim, we would check for a pulse or shake them then ask them "Are you OK?" Unfortunately, most victims we found were obviously dead. We would then move surviving victims to the Medical Triage in front of the building. With deceased victims, we moved them to the US Marine Gunnery Sergeant's office next to Post One on the ground floor near the front of the building. In addition to the difficult work of locating victims, the next challenge was to carry them on blown-down doors from whatever floor we found them on to the locations listed above. Some of the victims exceeded over 200 pounds in weight. We carried them over the semi broken remaining stairway. Given the extreme amount of physical exertion by the SRT, I decided to give them a 15-minute break every hour.

The SRT operation was periodically disrupted by fires, intense smoke and real concern by external supervisors that the building could collapse. When



## Nairobi—The First Day (Continued)

a fire was in the communications center generator room, it caused serious concern. The building was a poured concrete building with a heavy door. The building sat on a reservoir of diesel fuel and numerous oxy acetylene cylinders were stored in the building. This combination of explosive items confined by a concrete building could cause an explosion equal to the original truck bomb. I moved outside to the generator building location and found a Nairobi Fire Department truck. The truck only had water, which one does not use on an electrical fire. However, in this case, keeping the diesel fuel and cylinders cool was the primary consideration. I used an available front loader truck to knock a hole through the only window. We fed the fire hoses through the window until the building was filled with water. The electrical fire was extinguished, and the combustible contents safe, so I returned to the SRT in the building.

Approximately at 2:00 PM, the British Embassy sent a visiting Royal Army Engineering Company to us to help with the SRT. After a short briefing, the British engineers multiplied the number of our SRT teams increasing our chances to recovering living victims in the building. They were a very welcome sight. An Israeli Embassy SRT also arrived later, but we had enough search and rescue personnel working in the building. We sent them to help the Kenyans rescue victims in the collapsed Teacher's College building next to the Embassy.

As the day progressed, the GSO constructed tents in front of the Embassy providing water and other aid to the SRT. As evening (6 PM) began,

we discussed the possibility of continuing the SRT using portable lights and a generator. I was against this option for two reasons: a) the probability of someone still being alive in the building was extremely remote, and b) the danger of serious injury / death to the SRT in the building after dark was too great. We later discovered that no one remained alive in the building after 6 PM. The remaining victims we found in the following days obviously died instantly in the bombing. Make no mistake. This was a very difficult decision.

At this point, the RSO and I went to the USAID building where the Embassy staff was establishing a new embassy operation. We met with the Ambassador and briefed her on the SRT operations. She called us "heroes", but we refused this title since we were only doing our jobs while living up to the oath of office we originally took at the beginning of our job. I still feel the same today. Our sole concern was saving and protecting life. The fact that we did so is reward enough.

I hope I have given you some insight into being involved in a major terrorist attack. As simple as it may seem above, it took everything all of us had to do this and survive. The memories of that day are permanently imprinted on my soul. My continuing hope is that none of you ever have a similar experience. ◇

You can read the entire Nairobi—The First Day by connecting to the following link using Control-Left Click:

[Nairobi - The First Day](#)







NOVA's 50th Annual Training Event will be July 29 – August 1, 2024 in Washington, DC. We hope to see you there for our Golden Anniversary!

# The Good Life Section



## ASSIST

### Memorabilia

The ASSIST memorabilia below are available from ASSIST, 4371 Dinner Lake Blvd, Lake Wales, Florida 33859. Please add \$4.50 to your total order for shipping and handling. All profits from the sales of items goes to support terrorism survivors.



ASSIST Coin (front and back) \$10.00



ASSIST Lapel Pin \$4.00



ASSIST Hat Adjustable \$10.00



ASSIST T-Shirt \$10.00 L and XL Based on Availability of Size



## ASSIST Calendar

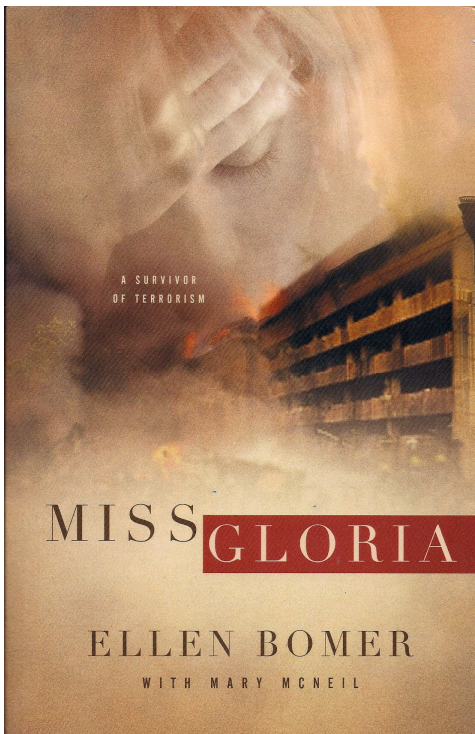
Apr 2—TWA 840 Bombing 1986  
Apr 5—Berlin Disco bombing 1986  
Apr 18—Beirut US Embassy Bombing 1983  
April 19—Oklahoma City Bombing 1995  
May 1—NYC Car Bomb 2010  
May 5—Cinco de Mayo  
May 12—Riyadh Western Housing Bombing 2003  
May 14—Mother's Day  
May 18—Armed Forces Day  
May 27—Memorial Day  
Jun 1—Little Rock Recruiting Center Shooting 2009  
Jun 6—D Day (WWII—1944) 80th Anniversary  
Jun 14—Flag Day

Jun 14—Karachi US Consulate Bombing 2002

Jun 16—Fathers' Day

Jun 19—Juneteenth

Note: If we inadvertently omit an important date, please contact us and we will correct it.



Miss Gloria details the struggles and triumphs of a wonderful lady blinded by the Al Qaeda attack on the United States Embassy, Nairobi, Kenya on August 7, 1998. We highly recommend this book as a must-read.

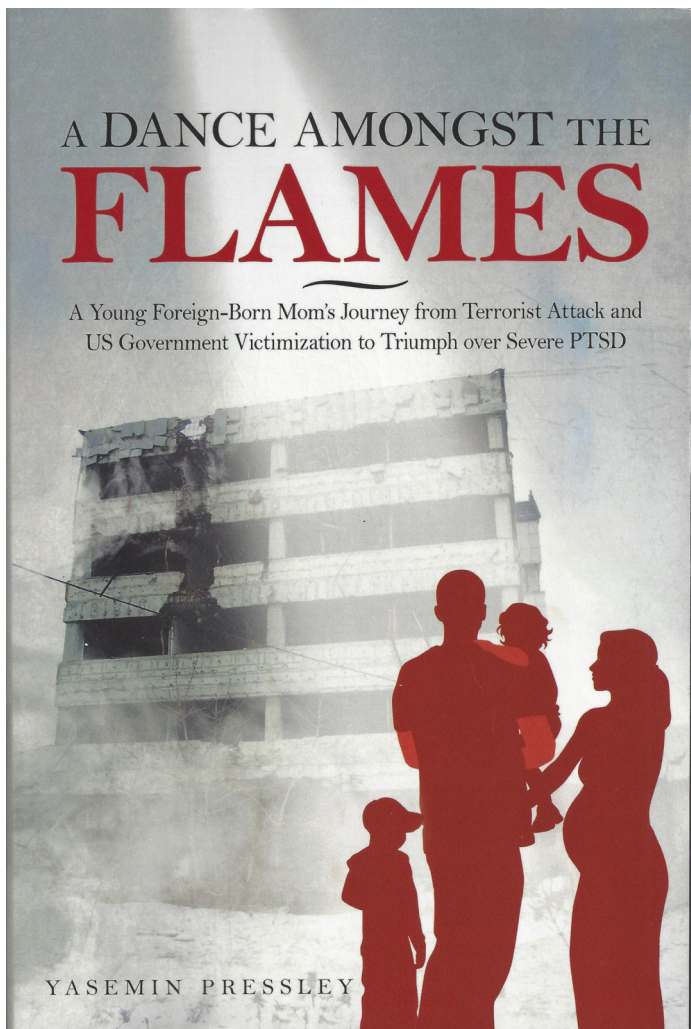
The book is available from the publisher: Redemption Press, 1730 Railroad St, Enumclaw, WA 98022 [www.redemption-press.com](http://www.redemption-press.com) as well as on Amazon Dot Com. [http://www.amazon.com/Miss-Gloria-Terrorism-Ellen-Bomer/dp/1414113668/ref=sr\\_1\\_3?ie=UTF8&qid=1431978093&sr=8-3&keywords=Miss+Gloria](http://www.amazon.com/Miss-Gloria-Terrorism-Ellen-Bomer/dp/1414113668/ref=sr_1_3?ie=UTF8&qid=1431978093&sr=8-3&keywords=Miss+Gloria)



If you are seeking someone to help you manage your terrorism compensation or other funds, UBS has helped us find creative and safe investments. Our contact is Ms. Holidae Hayes, telephone: (202) 585-5372.

This is an unpaid endorsement by the ASSIST Staff, and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the ASSIST Board or ASSIST membership.

ASSIST has a new website: <http://www.assist-survivors.org> .



BIOGRAPHY/AUTOBIOGRAPHY/MEMOIR

Ten percent of the proceeds from this book go directly to organizations that honor the injured American military women and men, from their darkest days to every step of their recovery. We need to do all we can to protect their family union and the future of their children.

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Yasemin, a young Muslim Turkish girl, falls in love with a handsome American named Frank in Ankara, Turkey. After they marry and have two children, Yasemin joins her husband working at the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya.

She can sense that her lifelong dreams are finally within reach. But external forces were set in motion to derail her plans - terrorists bombed the American Embassy in Nairobi on August 7th, 1998, while she and her husband are inside.

Frank is critically injured and flown to Germany for hospitalization. Yasemin follows with her family, physically unharmed but severely suffering from the effects of PTSD. It is then that she is confirmed pregnant with their third child, with Frank on death's doorsteps.

What follows is a tale of grief and struggle, but also of tremendous joy. From her diagnosis and struggle with PTSD treatments to Frank's physical therapy and abandonment by the State Department, Yasemin's story winds between betrayal and renewal as she searches for meaning in her new circumstances, and ultimately turns to God.

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Yasemin was born in Ankara, Turkey, where she spent her formative years with her family and met her husband, Frank. She has a degree in urban planning. Yasemin volunteers as a leader in a Christian organization, which leads women from all backgrounds to God. Yasemin and Frank have three children together and reside in the southern United States.

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*A Dance Amongst the Flames* is a highly recommended new book about the unique experiences of a terrorism survivor. The book is available at your local bookstore or through Amazon® at [https://www.amazon.com/Dance-Amongst-Flames-Foreign-Born-Victimization/dp/0578581515/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crid=20YC01N2RX455&keywords=a+dance+amongst+the+flames+by+yasemin+pressley&qid=1576686264&sprefix=A+Dance+Am%2Caps%2C160&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Dance-Amongst-Flames-Foreign-Born-Victimization/dp/0578581515/ref=sr_1_1?crid=20YC01N2RX455&keywords=a+dance+amongst+the+flames+by+yasemin+pressley&qid=1576686264&sprefix=A+Dance+Am%2Caps%2C160&sr=8-1) . A preview of the book can be found on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikt9Hk01818> .



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