

INTRODUCTION

Overcast skies, a slight but brisk wind, the Tennessee River a stone's throw away, sweater temperature—a perfect day for college football.

And, oh yes, the crowd—106,200 screaming fans at one of America's largest coliseums for college football, Neyland Stadium in Knoxville, Tennessee, home of the University of Tennessee Volunteers, who on this day are hosting the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame. A victory today would lift the Vols to the top of the college football rankings and virtually ensure that Tennessee will once again compete in a major bowl game, possibly even for the national championship. The stakes are high.

Soon the entire Tennessee football team will enter the stadium and run through a giant T formed by the band. This is so integral a part of the school's pageantry, so dramatic, that fans literally dream about the magic moment during the off-season. In fact, one man donated \$1 million to UT, with his only request being that he be allowed to run through the T with the team. Needless to say, he got his wish.

But before the much-anticipated run through the T can begin, it's national anthem time. Professor of Music George Batzas, with the band's accompaniment, belts out the anthem in his stunning operatic voice, just as he has for years. I'm sitting on the 50-yard line with my close friend, Bo Roberts. We have observed this colorful pregame spectacle many times, but on this day we are about to witness the most dramatic moment in all our years of attending Tennessee football games.

As the band nears the conclusion of "The Star Spangled Banner," a gorgeous bald eagle is released from the top of the stadium. It soars majestically above the field, and every eye is fixed on its graceful movements. At the very moment Dr. Batzas ends the stanza, "the land of the free and the home of the brave," the eagle cups its powerful wings and comes to rest on its handler's waiting arm.

It is a moment that surpasses even the special effects of a Cecil B. DeMille or Stephen Spielberg epic. The cheering and applause from the crowd is deafening. The moment is magic, and it seems to last forever.

The Power of the Eagle!

A beautiful spring day on the inland waters of Alaska, traveling from Bellingham, Washington, to Juneau, Alaska, to a speaking engagement.

I have chosen to take the state ferry so I can get a feel for the local culture, as many Alaskans use the ferry for transportation to the lower 48. They turn out to be every bit as friendly as I have imagined. There are also many tourists and sightseers on board, and while I have rented a small berth, there are many people camped out in tents or makeshift shelters on the ship's deck. People are sunbathing, playing backgammon, cards, drinking beer, and dozing. A senior citizen tourist group is enjoying a lecture about the history and traditions of some of Alaska's Native American tribes.

I think I'm the first to see it. Floating by the ship is a large log with a stately adult bald eagle sitting atop it. He doesn't seem to be much interested in us, but are we ever interested in him! As soon as I mention the eagle's presence, the card games and backgammon sets are abandoned as people (at least the non-Alaskans) flock to my side of the ship to observe the exquisite creature, which, although it is our national symbol, few of us have ever seen. The tourists bolt from the seminar inside the main cabin and hit the deck with cameras clicking. All of this commotion for a bird sitting on a log.

The Power of the Eagle!

Sitting beside my daddy at an outdoor amphitheater in Cherokee, North Carolina, watching the beautiful but sad pageant “Unto These Hills.” I am a young boy, and this is my first time to see “real live Indians. ”

We’ve spent the last few days touring the various sights and campgrounds in the Smokies. Since Daddy is a biology teacher and self-taught naturalist, he’s been educating me about the area’s tremendous array of plants, trees, and animals. My dad also teaches photography, and since he has a crippled right leg, he’s kept me busy carrying bags full of lenses, cameras, and film. It is years before acid rain will kill many plant species and dull the landscape. Everything is lush and vibrant.

The pageant is the culmination of our trip, and I am emotionally moved. Tears begin running down my face when the Cherokee are forcibly removed from their homes and herded like animals toward Oklahoma. The route they travel will be known as the Trail of Tears because of the tremendous suffering and death the Cherokee endure along the way.

Although the entire spectacle is a transforming experience, one part in particular is so riveting that it will never leave my memory—it is the eagle dance. Even though I don’t know what it means, I know that I am witnessing an inspirational event. The costumes are dazzling, but there is much more to this dance than sheer beauty. I now understand why many Native Americans consider the eagle dance to be a spiritual experience. It is!

The Power of the Eagle!

October 4, 1957. Sitting in the living room of my uncle Cercey's home in Huntsville, Alabama, listening to stories about my daddy.

My cousin suddenly bursts into the room, panic spreading over his face. "The Russians put a space capsule in orbit, you can see it in the sky," he yells. Everybody freezes. Then we all run outside and look above us. There it is, circling our world. How could the Russians beat *us*—the United States of America? But they have. It's called *Sputnik*.

The next day a lot of people start building bomb shelters.

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May 25, 1961. President Kennedy is telling the world that the United States will not only go to the moon, but we'll beat the Russians getting there.

It sounds good, but can we really do it? The Russians are leading the space race. But we, as a nation, are committed.

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July 20, 1969. Late as usual, I'm gunning my 1964 two-tone blue Plymouth Sports Fury toward a family reunion being held at a cousin's farm near Huntsville.

Arriving, I run up the creaky steps and slink through the door, embarrassed that everyone will be upset, once again, at my perennial tardiness. But no one pays any attention to me. All eyes are glued to a fuzzy, black-and-white TV set, unusual for people who work the fields all day and go to bed at 8:00 or 9:00 each night so they can milk cows at 4:00 the next morning. Finally, the same cousin, now an engineer working at Redstone Arsenal, turns to me with a huge grin and says simply:

“The *Eagle* has landed.”

The Power of the Eagle!

These “snapshots” of personal experience capture the essence of how the very sight of an eagle can transform people's emotions, especially mine.

Knowledge is power, but enthusiasm pulls the switch.

IVERN BALL



No power is strong enough to be lasting if it labors under the power of fear.

CICERO



Within you lies a power greater than what lies before you.

ANONYMOUS



Man's flight through life is sustained by the power of his knowledge.

ANONYMOUS



Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you ain't.

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