



On Target

William G. "Bill" Farrow was born in the Pee Dee area of South Carolina. Darlington is a sleepy little town, about a good 3-iron from Florence, 80 miles east of Columbia and about the same distance southeast of Charlotte, NC. Darlington's claim to fame is the Southern 500 stock car race which annually attracts 60,000 fans to a town of 6,700.

Bill's family was very poor. Add to this, his mom and dad separated when he was eleven. But he persevered, became an Eagle Scout, did well and graduated from high school. Under the circumstances he matured early, earning his own spending money, developing a keen mind, and at six foot two with an infectious smile and sparking blue eyes, attracted the girls.

He could not afford to go to college, so he worked odd jobs for three years, saved his money, and with a little help from his aunt, entered the University of South Carolina. He studied civil engineering, making a B+ average his first semester. He loved college, earned his pilot's license along the way, and fell in love with Lib Simms, who he intended to marry.

While at the University he wrote:

"My Future"

"The time has come to decide what rules I am going to set myself for daily conduct. My aim is decided. Work with a purpose is the only means of achieving an end."

1. Stay in glowing health, take a good, fast one-hour workout each day.
2. Search out current, past, and future topics on aviation.
3. Work hard on each day's lessons—shoot for an "A".
4. Stay close to God—do His will and commandments. He is my friend and protector. Believe in Him, trust in His ways, not in my own confused understanding of the universe.
5. Do not waste energy or time in fruitless pursuits, learn to act from honest fundamental motives. Simplicity in life leads to the fullest living. Order my life—in order, there is achievement; in aimlessness, there is retrogression.
6. Fear nothing, be it insanity, sickness, or failure. Always be upright—look the world in the eye.
7. Keep my mind always clean, allow no evil thoughts to destroy me. My mind is my very own, to think and use just as I do my arms. It was given me by the Creator to use as I see fit, but to *think wrong is to do wrong!*

8. Concentrate! Choose the task to be done, and do it to the best of my energy and ability.
9. Fear not for the future. Build on each day as though the future for me is a certainty. If I die tomorrow, that is too bad, but I will have done today's work!
10. Never be discouraged over anything! Turn failure into success.

The President of the United States praised "My Future," ministers delivered sermons about it, and it was quoted in newspapers and magazines far and wide.

BILL FARROW WAS EXECUTED AT THE AGE OF 24.

From what you have read so far, pick one of the following:

1. His tough childhood caught up to him. He was convicted of killing a man in anger. DNA would have cleared him. We lost a potentially great leader.
2. He became a drug dealer to have money for college and got caught in a "deal gone bad".
3. He is a war hero.

The year was 1939. Bill was watching the world's events from the warm confines of college life, but became increasingly disturbed about the war in Europe and the United States being drawn in. He decided to leave school early to serve his country, much to the dismay of his mom and family members who were sacrificing to pay his tuition. In 1940, at the age of 22, he joined the Air Force and became a B-25 bomber pilot.

Pearl Harbor was bombed on December 7, 1941. The nation was reeling from this surprise attack and subsequently saw its confidence and morale suffer as the Japanese made tremendous military gains in the Pacific. It was decided, in great secrecy, that our country needed a shot in the arm, a morale booster, some retaliatory act that, although maybe insignificant from a military point of view, would energize our war effort. The country needed someone to step forward. One of those was Bill Farrow. In 1942 he volunteered for a mission that had never been attempted, and in which the odds of success, and even survival, were unknown.

On April 18, 1942, just four months past Pearl Harbor, Bill Farrow along with Co-pilot Lt. Robert L. Hite, Navigator Lt. George Barr, Bombardier Cpl. Jacob D. DeShazer and Engineer/Gunner Sgt. Harold A. Spatz took off from the deck of the USS Hornet in what was to become the Doolittle Raid, a daring strike on mainland Japan.

Like most military missions everything did not go as planned. Believing security was compromised they had to take off before the planned departure point, making fuel the final make or break factor. The bombs were on target, the military mission was a huge success, but they ran out of fuel far short of their destination of friendly forces, bailed out in pitch black dark over mainland China and were captured by the Japanese the next morning. They were tortured unmercifully for months, put on a starvation diet in the midst of unspeakable living conditions, given a "trial" and ordered to be executed on October 15, 1942.

On the day before his execution, he was allowed to write one last letter home. He was not thinking of himself or the cruel fate that would be his in less than 24 hours. He was thinking of the love he had for his mom, and Lib, the girl he would not marry. What could he say to spare them the overwhelming grief that was sure to come? At the end of the letter he wrote these words that will live forever:

“Don't let this get you down. Just remember God will make everything right and that I'll see you all again in the hereafter. Read 'Thanatopsis' by Bryant if you want to know how I am taking this. My faith in God is complete, so I am unafraid.”

What are the lessons of leadership? I would love to hear from you. Seven key questions:

1. Is patriotism a quality of leadership?
2. Was he destined to become a great leader?
3. If he was living today, what would he say about our country's leaders?
4. How would you react in similar circumstances?
5. Where is courage in the hierarchy of leadership traits?
6. Is “My Future” applicable 66 years later?
7. I wrote that the mission was a huge success. Was it?



I encourage your response to these thoughts. farlgroup@aol.com

Have a great day!

Please forward this on or send us the e-mail addresses of co-workers, friends or family members who might enjoy a monthly leadership thought.