

The Passing of the Torch

In the novel *Deliverance*, by James Dickey, the themes of man and his mind set are pondered upon many times. The theme "the passing of the torch" seemed to stand out in my mind more and more as the novel concluded. Throughout the novel, three of the characters seemed to rely on the fourth character quite a bit, the hero of the day. Though, towards the end of the novel, their hero of the day had fallen out of the "game," as Lewis called it, when they needed him most. This situation proposed the scene for which the passing of the torch from the fallen hero to the newly risen, soon-to be-hero, took place.

Before the four men left on their camping trip, Ed said "I liked Lewis; I could feel myself getting caught up again in his capricious and tenacious enthusiasms that had already taken me bow-hunting and varmint-calling with him, and down into a small, miserably cold cave where there was one dead, crystalline frog. Lewis was the only man I knew who could do with his life exactly what he wanted to." This thought of Ed's goes to show how much he followed and depended on Lewis. Through this thought, it seems as though the majority of the reason Ed ever did any camping or outdoor activities was because he had Lewis to back him up. It also seemed that Ed was somewhat jealous of Lewis. Ed was jealous because of Lewis' ability to do whatever he wanted, his willingness and ability to deal with the outdoors, and Lewis' body build. Drew and Bobby also seemed to rely on Lewis quite a bit, but not even as close to as much Ed did. They were able to say "no" at first when the idea of the trip came up, although, later they were talked into it.

Whereas with Ed, he found himself saying "yes" right from the get go. It was not until later, when Lewis picked him up, that Ed had second thoughts about the trip. However, even after having second thoughts, Ed was able to reason that with Lewis there, he would be okay.

On the second day of the trip, the four men came upon two "mountain men" who performed sodomy on Bobby. Lewis came and killed one of the men. However, one of them got away. Later that day, the four men were heading down the river. Drew was presumably shot, by the surviving mountain man, and fell out of the canoe. At this point in the story, Lewis injured his leg and started to slip into what seemed like shock. "He thinks we can't get at him. And if we can, we can kill him." Bobby says this to Ed during the evening of the second day. I believe that at this point in time, Lewis still had control over the remaining party. However, he was quickly losing it to a more capable leader, Ed. Lewis is still making the plans at this point, which shows that he is still the leader but is delegating a good portion of the work to Ed. It is not until later in the novel when Ed takes over the leadership role in the group.

On the third day, the remaining three escaped the wrath of the surviving mountain man and were able to make it down river to Ainty, the town where they had the two brothers drop the cars off. On their way down river, Ed began to think about their story. When Ed relayed the story to Bobby, Lewis overheard it but didn't say anything. When they came ashore in the town, Lewis says "You're doing it exactly right; you're doing it better than I could do. Hang in there." This quote, at least to me, shows that Ed had taken over control of the group, and Lewis approved of the action. From this point on, in the story, Ed had control over the group. It becomes more and more evident as the novel progresses, however, I believe that it was at this point that the passing of the torch took place.

Throughout life, many things and people can take control of our lives. Having a job or a career can be a controlling force. Having a committed relationship can be a controlling force. However, none of these controlling forces really offer a "passing of the torch" experience. When in a military situation, many opportunities to pass the torch can come about. One is when a man or woman advances in rank. One example of this is from a novel we read previously in this class, *The Great Santini*. The passing of the torch took place at two points in the novel. One example was when Bull Meecham took control of the unit he was assigned to. A second example was when Ben took over the family, in a way, after Bull died.

