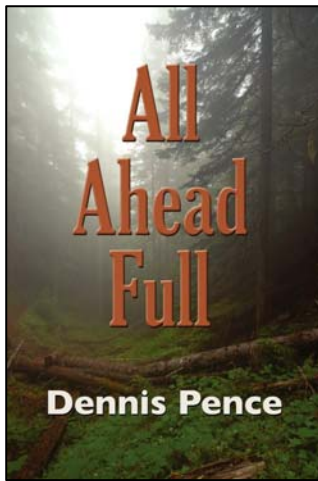




All Ahead Full

Dennis Pence



A courageous, politically incorrect novel, ALL AHEAD FULL is the story of a timber family's rugged determination to save their logging business in the politically correct Pacific Northwest. With the blustery Washington coast as a backdrop, Glenn Connelly fights for the family empire. He succumbs to the exotic Maria, a beauty whose only goal is to destroy Glenn. But, Maria fails to consider Glenn himself. She falls in love with him.

ALL AHEAD FULL

by Dennis Pence

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ISBN 978-1-60910-637-9

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BookLocker.com, Inc.
2011

First Edition

Dedication

This book is for Teri. Wife, lover, mother, and best friend. In the sun we cast a single shadow.

And, in memory of my grandfather, Glenn Pence, (1903-1982). He was a true “All Ahead Full” man.

Author's Note

The title of this novel, *All Ahead Full*, is a term loggers use, both present and especially in the past during the heyday of the logging industry. In short, the term “all ahead full” means when you do something or work at something, give it all you've got. Go full bore. Work your hardest. And, on your off time, play your hardest. Everything you do, do it the best you can, and more.

It doesn't matter what the establishment thinks or believes. What matters is how well you do life, however politically incorrect your life may be.

All Ahead Full is a very politically incorrect novel.

CHAPTER I

The wind howled through the inky blackness of the night carrying with it the force of the driving rain. On the ridge crest, treetops bent over from the strength of the gusts. The old growth fir forest served as a shelter in the windy darkness. Out in the open, in the clearcuts, the wind blew unchecked up the slopes and over the crest of the mountain. Water ran in every low spot over the saturated ground. It was cold. A few degrees cooler and the rain would have been falling as snow. Typical winter weather for the west side of the Olympic Peninsula.

Headlights moved slowly through the rainy blackness up a one lane, gravel logging road. Occasionally a fog bank would hide the lights, only to have them reappear farther on.

The vehicle, an old beatup Volkswagen bus, pulled off the road and came to a stop in a turnout. The headlights shone briefly on giant old growth fir trees, then went out. The motor was shutoff. Two men and a woman sat inside. A flame flared briefly as the man on the passenger side lit a cigarette. Or possibly a joint. He sucked in on it and then passed it onto the woman. It was a joint. The woman declined and passed it on to the other man.

The two men smoked the weed, passing it back and forth to each other. They sat there as if waiting for someone. Occasionally the driver would lean out the door and look down the road behind him.

After what seemed to be an hour or so, they embarked from the van out into the rain-laden night. In seconds they were soaked. The woman's blonde hair hung in strings, the water running off the ends. One of the men produced a canvas bag. He reached into it for what appeared to be hammers and passed them to the others. Next came a fistful of spikes which they shoved into their coat pockets. He glanced down the road a last time.

"No one's coming. Let's do it."

"Who's going to be out on a night like this?" the woman asked, more to herself than either of the two men.

They leaned into the wind and walked into the old-growth forest, using flashlights to show the way. At the edge of the road one of the

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lights illuminated a yellow sign stapled to a tree. The words clearcut boundary and U. S. Forest Service were printed on it.

After walking a short distance into the forest, they stopped at one of the mammoth trees. One of the men pulled a spike from his pocket and proceeded to drive it into the tree with a hammer. They continued driving the spikes around the trunk at about the height a logger would sink a chainsaw into the tree to fall it. The woman stood by and watched. She occasionally handed one or the other a spike.

For an hour they continued through the forest hammering spikes into trees. The woman followed. The din of the storm drowned out any noise the pounding might have made. And the heavy rain would erase any indication of their presence.

After they were finished they walked back to the van. They tossed the hammers and spikes into the canvas bag, and the bag into the back of the bus.

One of the men grinned crookedly as they climbed into the van. "That ought to slow the bastards down. Now let's get the hell out of here before the wind blows one of these trees down and blocks us in." To commemorate the occasion, he lit another joint, inhaled in on it, and passed it to the others. Again, the woman declined the offer to smoke.

He started the engine and proceeded to drive back in the direction they came from. Their taillights disappeared down the hill into the rainy blackness of the night. In a few minutes their tire tracks were washed out. Any trace of them ever having been there was gone.

Except, of course, the spikes in the trees.

CHAPTER II

Whitecaps dotted the somber waters of Grays Harbor and washed over the exposed mudflats of a low tide along Airport Way in Hoquiam. The wind and the gray late afternoon sky forecast the rain that was about to fall. A few drops hit the windshield of the yellow Ford pickup Glenn Connelly was driving. Glenn, a chew of snuff in his mouth, spit into a can he kept handy and turned on the wipers. He negotiated the square corner where Moon Island Road went the short distance to the city of Hoquiam sewer treatment plant. Traveling a few hundred yards he turned to the left into the lumber mill and log sorting yard he and his brother Jacob owned. The mill and yard, along with a truck and equipment shop set across the road from the murky water of the harbor.

He waved at a log truck driver driving a Kenworth painted the same yellow as his pickup. Yellow was the company colors of the trucks and other vehicles. Along with a big green C painted on the doors of anything that moved.

The C stood for Connelly. The logging company that old Albert Connelly started some fifty plus years before. Upon his death six years ago, the torch was passed to his sons Jacob and Glenn, whom were doing their level best to carry on the tradition.

The “Big C” the locals affectionately called it. Or perhaps not so affectionately, depending upon the prevailing viewpoint. Which hadn’t been all too good lately Glenn wryly reflected.

Glenn stopped in front of an office and spit into the can a last time. Turning the ignition off, he opened the door and stepped out just as the skies opened up and sent forth a deluge of rain. He sprinted up a short stairs to the door of the office. He reached for the knob, and then as an afterthought, he spit the chew out of his mouth. Brother Jacob didn’t approve of chewing in the office.

He entered and was greeted by a pretty young secretary. “Hi Mary. How goes it today?” he responded.

“I’m fine. He,” she indicated with a nod of her head to a closed door that led to Jacob’s office, “isn’t doing so good. Don’t know what

the problem is.” She watched Glenn as he poured himself a cup of coffee from a pot setting on a table in a corner. She was struck as always by his rugged good looks and build of his body. He was built well for his forty years of age. He was an inch over six feet and a tight one hundred eighty pounds. He was dressed in typical logger attire of hickory shirt, logger jeans held up by red suspenders, and expensive lace up work boots. Dark brown hair that partially covered his ears and was in need of a trim flowed out from under a baseball style cap that he wore. There was a green C on the front of the cap. His intense blue eyes gave him an indefinable mystique.

If only he was a few years younger she wistfully thought. Or she was a few years older than her twenty-three. The fact he wasn’t married added to his mystique. She heard he once had a wife, but beyond that knew very little.

Glenn knew she was watching him as she usually did. He also knew she had a crush on him. For one tantalizing moment he allowed himself to wonder what it would be like if he was twenty-three again. There was no denying how pretty she was. And, a certain sex appeal emanated from her considering the skimpy outfits she habitually wore.

He finished pouring the coffee and glancing at her, smiled as he headed for the door to Jacob’s office. Mary blushed like a schoolgirl at being caught looking at him.

Without knocking, Glenn opened the door and entered the office. Jacob Connelly sat at a desk looking at a computer screen with a spreadsheet on it. To anybody who saw the two together immediately recognized that they must be brothers. Jacob, the older of the two by a couple years, had the same dark brown hair, only trimmed neatly, and the blue eyes. He was only an inch shorter than Glenn, and a couple pounds lighter.

The big difference was Jacob looked the businessman he was, dressed in casual business clothes. Whereas Glenn looked like the logger he was. Which was exactly as old Albert Connelly intended. Jacob was president of the company in charge of the business end, and Glenn was vice president supervising the logging and mill operations.

Albert Connelly knew his sons well and placed them in the roles he thought best suited for each, with just enough cross over that one could

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do the other's job if needed. Jacob had a degree in business administration with a minor in logging engineering and had been with the company since college. Glenn did a stint in the military as a pilot and then tramped the world for hire, willing to fly anything that had wings. Only later was he talked back into the folds of the family business to run the logging operations. The two complimented each other well.

"Why the sour look, Jake?" Glenn asked, noticing the scowl on his face.

Jacob never looked up from his figures. He punched a couple keys and then answered. "We're going to have to borrow money again this month to make the payroll."

Glenn sipped his coffee and said nothing. The stress of owning a multi-million dollar logging company and making it work never seemed to bother him as much as it did Jacob.

Jacob continued, "I thought we'd be able to put a cuttin' crew up on West Salmon by now, but one of them tree huggers from the forest service seen a spotted owl down the road a couple miles. So, they have to do another owl survey," he said with a disgusted tone to his voice. He looked up at Glenn. "How many surveys do those bureaucratic bunglers have to do? There's been several owl surveys already, as well as a marbled murelet survey, and one for silt runoff and rare plants. What the hell else are they going to come up with? I've got Munsen working on it trying to stop this last glitch."

Jim Munsen was their lawyer that they kept on retainer for these issues. There were none better in Aberdeen or Hoquiam. Or all of Western Washington for that matter.

Mary was right. Jacob must be having a bad day. He rarely said a cuss word of any type. "And if that's not enough," he went on, "rumor has it that another environmental group is trying to get an injunction in federal court to stop us from logging it. I thought we had the court cases cleared up. Was I ever naïve about that one. How long has all this been pending now? Over four years since we got the bid on that sale."

He looked back at the computer screen. "Last damned time this outfit ever bids on another forest service timber sale. I was counting on West Salmon to bale us out. But, I guess not. As much as I hate to,

maybe we could log a little more company timber. At least we could make the next few payrolls without having to borrow.”

They both knew how the other felt about that subject. Neither one wanted to log any more company timberland in the near future. The truth was, they had only a little more than a year’s logging left on their own private land. For several years now they had been logging their own timber to keep the outfit afloat. Since the stricter environmental legislation passed by both the state and federal governments, especially on public land, their only option was to log their own timber. Now they were about out of wood.

Not that they hadn’t reforested their land. They had. In fact, planting more trees than they took out. But it would be years before those trees would be mature enough to harvest. Like twenty to thirty years in the least.

West Salmon up north of Quinault with its sizable old growth fir was going to bale them out. Now it looked as if it wouldn’t.

Glenn grinned shrugging off the stress of it all. “When we bid on that sale four years ago, we thought all this environmental legislation would blow over. We sure didn’t call that one right.”

Jacob glanced at a picture of Albert Connelly hanging on the wall. The resemblance between the two sons and their father was remarkable. The same blue eyes, the broad shoulders, but most of all the rugged individualistic presence that he passed on through genetics to his sons. “It took the Ol’ Man almost fifty years to build this outfit, and us six years to go broke with it,” he retorted.

“But,” Glenn answered, “the Ol’ Man came around at a time when the land was covered with old growth, the country was hungry for business, the government was more friendly to business, and there wasn’t a lack of timber supply. Plus, there were no fucking tree huggers in those days.”

Jacob winced at Glenn’s use of the eff word. Since he rarely used profanity himself, and then only mild profanity, he didn’t like to hear it. Out in the woods with the loggers, profanity was second nature to them. He accepted that. But, here in the office, it bothered him. Profanity should be left out in the woods. Especially the eff word.

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Glenn just didn't give a shit. Oh, he could be discreet when he wanted to. But if he felt like cussing, he cussed. Besides, he owned fifty percent of this outfit and he'd cuss where he damn well pleased.

"Something has to be done," Jacob asserted. "There isn't a lack of timber supply. There's a lack of competent foresters to manage the timber supply. Both in the department of natural resources and the forest service. The DNR does a little better than the forest service, but not much. Problem is, the tree huggers hold the reins now."

Glenn said nothing. They'd covered this ground many times before. Every logger around thought the DNR and the forest service lacked capable timber managers. It was fact that all the older competent foresters in both agencies were gradually replaced with a younger generation of environmental types. But the problem went much deeper than that. It went to the halls of congress and the administration. The endangered species act was the major piece of past legislation that had brought about the demise of the timber industry in the Northwest. With the majority of land in the western United States under state and federal ownership, it wasn't likely much would change in the near future. There would have to be a major overhaul in congress, and with the present political climate in the country today, that wasn't likely to happen.

The government needs a major overhaul. Pronto." Jacob paused as if hunting for words. "Maybe *I'll* run for congress," he said with emphasis on the *I'll*.

Glenn looked mildly at Jacob. This was new. He always knew Jacob's strong political feelings. He had them himself. Except, he didn't let it eat at him like Jacob did. So now he was thinking of running for congress.

"As a democrat?" Glenn asked trying to hide a grin.

"Hell no!" Jacob exploded. "You know damn good and well what I'd run as!"

Glenn sipped his coffee. It was almost cold. The wind blew harder off the bay and hammered the raindrops like pellets against the windows on the west side of the office. "How would you expect to win then? Only one republican has been elected from this district since the fifties. And now the office is held by a democrat again."

"It's about time another republican got elected again!" Jacob snapped.

"What makes you think the republicans would do any better than the democrats? Being in control of congress for twelve years, they had ample opportunity to change things but instead decided to go along with the status quo."

Jacob rolled his eyes. "You're about to give me that third party spiel again. How the libertarians would be a much better choice. I agree the libertarians would be a much better choice on most issues. However, the libertarians aren't going to be in a position of power anytime in the near future. They have a hard time even getting on the ballot, much less win an election."

"It has to start somewhere. Actually the libertarians are doing quite good as compared to the short time the party has been in existence," was all Glenn said.

"The change is going to have to be made within the two party system. That's where the power is. It will have to be the republicans to do it. The democrats are controlled by a bunch of socialists. To quote former President Reagan, the democrats have moved so far to the left they've left America." Jacob smiled to himself. He was good at remembering quotes. "I wish Reagan was still president," he said quietly, more to himself than Glenn.

"And, you think you're the one to lead this revolution from within the Republican Party?"

Jacob shrugged an answer.

Glenn went on. "First you'd have to get elected. Tough feat in this district." He finished his coffee and set the cup on a windowsill. He stared out at the rain being blown in sheets across the sorting yard. A truck driver was pulling the wrappers off his load while a log stacker held the logs in place.

"If I could get the union vote, I could get elected."

"Good luck getting the union vote. You know they almost always vote democrat."

"Yeah, I know," Jacob snapped. "What I don't know, is why. Those same democrats that proclaim to be for working families turn around and push for environmental legislation that takes their jobs away."

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“There’s more than just the union vote that makes this district mostly democratic. There’s the public employee faction and the retirees whom are living longer and are a product of the New Deal and Roosevelt. Also the special interest groups such as the environmentalists. I could go on. When you come down to it, loggers and millworkers make up a much smaller percentage of the labor market than in the Ol’ Man’s time.” Glenn wasn’t sure why they were covering this ground again. They had covered it many times in the past.

“You’re right. But, something has to be done. Or the timber industry will sink into oblivion. All there’ll be left is the big outfits. Only because they own vast tracts of forest land. All the smaller outfits like us will be gone.”

“There are many here on the harbor that think we’re a big company. In the same league with the big outfits. Thus having absolutely no sympathy for us.”

“How could they compare us with the big companies? We have some timberland, with very little timber left I might add, one mill, a little less than twenty trucks, with part of them parked right now, and three sides going. The mill’s operating at fifty percent of capacity. Doesn’t sound like we’re too big to me, or doing all that well.”

Glenn turned away from the rain-streaked window. From force of habit he reached into his pocket for a can of snuff. He shoved it back into the pocket at the look on his brother’s face. He momentarily forgot Jacob’s disdain for chewing tobacco. Must have been temporary insanity he mused to himself. “But, as compared to most gyppos, we seem big to the average person on the street. Right or wrong, they associate big with greedy, capitalist pigs that are almost always republicans.”

“Yeah, but...” Jacob left the words unsaid with an exasperated sigh.

“Look Jake, I’m not trying to rain on your parade. But, facts are facts. What the public perceives us to be, and who or what we really are, are two entirely different things. You are stuck dealing with the misperception of loggers and the industry as the public sees it. You know damn good and well what the current political climate is in Western Washington. Not conducive to loggers or republicans, either one. In the rural parts of the westside, only Lewis County is solid

republican. There're a couple swing counties that could go either way, but all the rest are democrat. Granted, most of the people living in the rural areas tend to vote republican, but they make up a very small percentage of the population as a whole. Look at Grays Harbor County, our own county. It has the perception of being rural because of all the timberland. But, in reality, sixty-five percent of the residents of this county live in town. That leaves only thirty-five percent rural. And part of that thirty-five percent is not in your district. Lewis County is the only county with a larger percentage rural population than urban. And it's the only county on the entire Westside that is solid republican."

Jacob arose from his chair at the desk and picked up his coffee cup. "You want some more coffee?" he asked Glenn. Glenn handed him his cup and Jacob exited to the outer office.

Glenn could see through the open door a shapely, nylon clad leg as Mary sat at her desk talking on the phone. Once again it struck him what if he was a few years younger.

Jacob returned with the two cups of steaming coffee, closing the door behind him. He handed Glenn his and sat back down in the desk chair. Outside they heard a whistle sound off signaling the end of the workday. It was four o'clock. The noise of the equipment operating in the yard and the mill ceased. In a couple minutes they heard the sound of engines being started as the crews left in their cars and pickups for home, or the tavern, depending on usually whether they were married or single.

At one time this mill operated around the clock. But that was the old days. Now, after four in the afternoon, only the shop and maintenance crew worked nights.

"I wish you would sit down," Jacob said. "You always stand, and usually look out a window," he complained.

Glenn flopped down on a sofa in the corner that Jacob kept for meetings in his office. He sipped his coffee. "Politics aside, our present problem is making the payroll. How should we do it?"

A light knock came on the door. "It's open," Jacob responded, irritated at the interruption.

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Mary poked her head inside the door. "Jim Munsen is on the phone. Said it's important," she said in a somewhat timid voice. Jacob always made her nervous. Unlike Glenn, whom she felt comfortable with.

Jacob nodded. "Thanks Mary." He reached for the phone on his desk.

"If there's nothing else you want me to do, I'm going to go home."

"Go ahead. I've nothing else."

Glenn gave her a winning grin. "Don't let him intimidate you Mary. Have a good evening."

She smiled back at him, but immediately wiped it from her face when she saw the look of irritation Jacob gave Glenn. She quietly shut the door.

Jacob answered the phone. "Jim, Jacob Connelly here. How's it going?" They talked a few minutes while Glenn arose from the couch and stared out the rain-streaked window. The yard was quiet now. Over at the shop, above the noise of the rain beating against the window, he could hear somebody pounding with a hammer. Then a small engine cracked into life as one of the shop crew fired up a welder.

"Thanks a lot Jim. Best news we've had around here in a long time." He hung up the phone.

There was a grin on his face. First time today thought Glenn. "We've got the clearance to start laying down trees up on West Salmon. Somehow Munsen got a judge to dismiss the claim by the forest service that they needed another spotted owl count."

"You're right. Best news we've had around here in quite some time," Glenn responded echoing Jacob's sentiment a minute ago.

"Let's get a cuttin' crew up there first thing in the morning. Get the wood on the ground before anything else goes wrong."

Jacob reached for the phone again. "I'll give the forest service a call at Quinalt right now to see if we can have someone from timber meet you there in the morning." He glanced at the clock. "It's almost five. I hope there's somebody still there. You know how those government employees are. Come quittin' time and it's like a stampede out the door."

After a few minutes he got off the phone. "They'll be there in the morning. But not until ten. The ranger wants to be there too. And some

bureaucrat from the supervisor's office in Olympia will be there. They want to walk the boundaries of the sale with you again. They want our bullbuck there too. To make sure we know exactly where the lines are."

Glenn rolled his eyes and drank some coffee. He ruefully eyed the contents in the cup. Damn stuff would float a horseshoe. Just the way he liked it. "I'll hold off on the crew until day after tomorrow. No use to have them settin' on their asses waiting for the forest service to wind up their bullshit. I'll have Frank meet me there in the morning." Frank Gesavich was their bullbuck. Supervising the fallers.

They heard the outer door open as someone entered the office. Then a pretty brunette poked her head in the inner door. "Anybody here?" she smiled. It was Jacob's wife Kris. Following her was an eleven-year old girl who was a mirror image of her mother.

The girl ran across the room to Jacob, giving him a hug and a kiss on the cheek. "Hi Daddy."

Kris followed and leaned down and kissed her husband. Immediately the intense manner of Jacob softened. It was as if he was transformed from the hard driving businessman to the consummate family man.

Glenn watched the interaction of the family with envy. He suddenly felt empty inside, as if there was something missing from his solitary independent life.

Kris glanced his way. "Hi Glenn. How are you doing today?" she asked pleasantly.

"Just trying to keep your old man down to earth," he grinned.

"Tell me about it," she responded. "Full time job keeping him down to earth." She glanced at Jacob affectionately.

The girl skipped over to Glenn. "Uncle Glenn, how are you?"

Glenn leaned down and gave her an affectionate hug. "I'm fine, Alicia. How's my favorite niece today?" Actually it was his only niece. Since she was his only niece, it was safe to refer to her as his favorite.

"Where's Al?" Jacob asked referring to their other child, a boy of fourteen whom had been named after his grandfather.

"Basketball practice. They've got the tournament this weekend."

Kris and Jacob chatted about nothing while Alicia told Uncle Glenn of some school project her class was doing.

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“Well, must be going,” Kris said. “Don’t forget we’ve got the potluck at church tonight. Have to be there no later than six-thirty. It’s already past five,” she said glancing at her watch.

They both turned to Glenn. “Why don’t you join us at church for the potluck this evening. Save you having to cook for yourself,” Jacob said.

Glenn grinned, somewhat uncomfortable. “The walls would fall in if I went to church. Wouldn’t want that to happen.”

“You’re sure welcome to go with us,” Kris invited. “Mom’s going too,” she said referring to Glenn and Jacob’s mother.

Glenn waved a hand. “I’ll take a rain check.”

Jacob pursued it. “You should get out more. Socialize a little. It would do you good. Who knows, maybe you’d meet a good Christian lady, instead of living alone clear out there on the East Fork.”

“All the good ones are taken. There aren’t any good ones my age. They’re all married,” Glenn responded with a grin.

“Nonsense. I can think of a couple women in our church that would like to know you better.” Knowing Glenn couldn’t be persuaded, Jacob, Kris and Alicia left.

Glenn locked up the office. After checking in with the shop crew to see if there was anything they needed, he climbed into his pickup to head for home out at Humptulips. On second thought, he drove to Bowerman Field, the local airport at Moon Island. It wasn’t over half a mile from the office.

He stopped at a hangar just past the café and fuel island that serviced the field. It was almost dark. The wind blew the rain out of the southwest across the runway. The windsock stood straight out from the force of the gusts.

He entered the hangar through a side door. The sound of the rain beating on the metal roof seemed inordinately loud, but was nevertheless, comforting. Using a flashlight, he walked over to an airplane. It was a Maule M5 Lunar Rocket. He looked at the airplane affectionately. How many scrapes had that plane pulled him out of?

Walking to a refrigerator in the back of the hangar, he opened it and found a can of beer. Popping the top, he took a swig. The rain beat a

melancholy rhythm on the roof and the wind rattled the big metal hangar door that fronted the runway.

Grabbing an extra can of the beer, Glenn walked past the Maule and unbolted the big door. With a heave he slid the door on its rollers open a couple feet. He hunted for a folding lawn chair and set it just inside the opening.

He sat down in the chair and swigged his beer. Occasionally a higher velocity gust of wind would blow the rain in and hit him in the face. It felt good.

What was it about these kind of nights? Sitting beside this airplane in the dark with the rain and wind casting its insensate fury? The alternating green and white of the airport rotating beacon and the runway lights cast an eerie glow through the rainy blackness of the night. A sense of being alone came over him.

He glanced at the yellow airplane with its green stripe that ran the length of the fuselage. He repressed a sudden urge to climb into the cockpit and fire up the engine and fly off into the stormy night. That wouldn't be the wise thing to do, what with the storm raging. Not to mention the alcohol he was consuming.

But, damn it. Due to the time constraints from being the logging boss and half owner of a major timber company on the harbor, he didn't get many chances to fly these days. There was a time when he flew many hours in this plane. But that was now long past and in a different part of the world. Almost as if he lived another lifetime in those days. Far removed from this one. Another lifetime that most parts he would just as soon forget about.

He sipped from the can of beer. The amber fluid was beginning to do its job of taking the edge off life. But along with blunting the edge off life, a feeling of melancholy came over him. As it always did. Which was not entirely unwelcome. The pleasure of being sad, famous author of the past Victor Hugo had called it.

Where had the time gone? He was now forty years old. With not much to show for it other than a couple lifetimes of experience. True, he owned fifty percent of the largest independent timber company on Grays Harbor. But, he didn't build it. The Ol' Man, Albert Connelly built it. Not him. Brother Jacob had far more to do with building and

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operating the company than he did. Other than time out for a master's degree, Jacob was at the Ol' Man's side working since he was a kid. Unlike Glenn, who after a stint in the military, roamed Central and South America, as well as other parts of the world.

About the only thing that he felt he truly earned was this yellow airplane sitting there beside him. It was like his friend. This plane in the past had been his shelter from time to time, and had saved his bacon a few times. As well as, like now, his drinking buddy. As was the pilot, the airplane was younger then, and in better shape.

There was the thirty-four acres and the log house he built himself out on the East Fork of the Humptulips River. He hand peeled the logs and crafted the house himself, from start to finish. A fact he took a lot of pride in. It took him over a year to do it because of the demands of the company. The only help he had was old Frank Gesavich, their bullbuck. Frank had been with the outfit for damn near forty years. Far longer than the few measly years since Glenn had returned from his wandering to take over as logging boss. Frank had more to do with building the company than he himself. Since Glenn was a kid, Frank took a liking to him and seemed to always be there for him.

He remembered another night like this. Another night of torrential rain beating on a tin roof, alcohol in the form of whiskey taking the edge off life. His companion this airplane. Except, the airplane was painted camouflage in those days rather than the bright yellow it was now. And that wet night long ago the weather was much warmer. It was in the mountains and jungle of Nicaragua.

He upended the can and drained it of its contents. He opened the extra can and began to sip it.

The green and white of the rotating beacon flashing its surrealistic light through the horizontal rain brought back the memories with much greater intensity than he intended. A gust stronger than the others blew the rain directly into his face, stinging his cheeks. He shivered a little from the wet cold of the night. Unlike that night so long ago which was almost oppressive due to the warmth of the tropics.

That other night from afar, a gust of wind blew the rain into his face. And with the rain had come the sound of gunfire.

Several hours later that night, the patrol returned from the dripping jungle carrying with them one of their own, blood dripping from a gaping chest wound. The wounded was Raule Cortez. Lieutenant Raule Cortez of the Contras. His breath came in gasps and rattled like reeds along a swamp. There wasn't much Glenn or the other members of the patrol could do for him, in an extremely remote jungle camp. He couldn't even be flown out because of the tropical storm raging. All of them felt helpless.

Glenn sipped his beer absently as the memories rattled his psyche with more intensity than ever. Raule's small band of revolutionaries that night had ambushed a camp of Sandanistas. The fight would have been a success had not Lieutenant Cortez caught a bullet in the chest. With their commanding officer out of the fight, the rest of the band lost the stomach for it and retreated.

Raule had been Glenn's only true friend in Nicaragua. They drank together, philosophized together, and on occasion, even read and discussed the Bible together. Which could be quite an ordeal considering Glenn was a Norte Americano of Protestant background, but not a church goer, and Raule was a devout Catholic whom believed that being a freedom fighter was the only right thing to do.

At one point, they even had the same woman in love with both of them. She couldn't make up her mind which one to love, Glenn or Raule. Still, there were no bad feelings between them. The woman done the only honorable thing she could do. She ran off with a high official in the government of a neighboring country. Over a jug of tequila one night they both had a good laugh on that one.

The major difference between him and Raule was, Raule had the consuming passion for freedom. And would give his life for freedom if he had to. As his brother and father had. Glenn on the other hand was in Nicaragua for only one thing, a lust for adventure. He occasionally got paid for his exceptional skill at the controls of an airplane, but many times did not. Which was alright by him. As long as he had grub, the occasional jug of whiskey, and an airplane to fly, that was all he needed. There were very few women in those days. What woman of any worth at all would want a gringo mercenary pilot?

ALL AHEAD FULL

Glenn convinced himself that at least he always flew for the right side. Those that were fighting for their individual freedom. He would never fly for a Marxist or Communist regime. Besides, wasn't the United States supporting the Contras? Or, so he rationalized.

Sitting there in the dark with the rain gusting into his face now and then, Glenn continued his journey down memory lane, reflecting on that night so long ago. His only true friend in Central America, Lieutenant Raule Cortez, principled freedom fighter for his people, died sometime in the rainy, predawn darkness. Raule's last request was not for himself. True to his principles and thinking of his men, he requested Glenn fly them out to safety. And to keep up the fight for freedom for the people.

That morning they buried Raule on a mountaintop overlooking the land he was trying to free from the Marxists. Glenn himself read from Raule's worn Catholic Bible.

He honored Raule's request and flew the men to safety in a remote village. It took several flights, and the last one was under heavy gunfire from the Sandanistas. They barely made it with the skin of their teeth. If you looked close, the airplane still bore the scars of that last flight.

It was about that time that Nicaragua finally held free elections and the Sandanistas were removed from power. Glenn, his only payment being the aircraft, departed for the states. He departed with a camouflaged airplane that had to be repainted, and not much else to show for it. Except the loss of a friend and too many memories. Memories he would just as soon forget. Memories of a man so principled as to give his life for his people while he himself had only a lust for adventure. And, a growing distrust of any form of governments and their motivations. Including his own. Especially now that all these years later the voters of Nicaragua elected the same sonofabitch communist that Raule Cortez fought so hard to defeat. So much for freedom and its defenders.

He finished his beer. Jacob and Kris and the kids would be at their church potluck now. Socializing and laughing, joking and having a good time, while he was sitting next to a war torn airplane on a stormy night with rain pounding the roof, all alone in the dark, drinking a beer trying to take the edge off life.

He bolted the hangar door shut and found his way to his pickup with the flashlight. He started the engine and pointed it for home out on the East Fork Humptulips River. At least it was his home. Built with his own two hands. And the hands of Frank Gesavich.

He wondered what it would be like to come home to a warm house on such a wintry night. A house with a woman in it.

He had a woman once. She was even a wife. Then one day he came home from work to find a note that said she couldn't handle it anymore. She took off with a life insurance salesman to Portland.

He really couldn't blame her. He was gone much of the time because of his position with the company. When he did get home, it was usually late at night. It wasn't much of a life he had to offer.

He turned from Airport Way onto Paulson Road, windshield wipers working to keep the rain off. His headlights revealed an old beatup Volkswagen bus parked alongside the road. There appeared to be three people sitting inside. Two men and a woman. The woman's blonde hair reflected the light. He idly wondered what they were doing parked out here on this rainy night.

He reached highway one oh one, stuffed a chew of snooze behind his lower lip, and headed for Humptulips.

"Well, we sure as hell can't do anything now," one of the men in the Volkswagen bus said. "He's seen us. If we monkey wrench anything, we could be linked to the scene."

The other man, who sat in the driver's seat, started the engine. They drove off, heading down Airport Way past the Connelly Timber Company. They could see the big green C logo above the office door. "Bastards. They're murderers. Raping the land the way they do."

They drove on through the wet streets of Hoquiam, over the Simpson Avenue Bridge, and into Aberdeen. "Leave me at my motel," said the woman.

"We are hungry, Maria. You going to buy us dinner?"

Maria held back a disgusting retort. These low lifes. But, she needed them. "Find a restaurant."

They pulled into a greasy spoon and parked. The rain fell on the roof of the bus. She started to disembark, but thought better of it. Quite

honestly, she didn't want to be seen with these low lifes. She opened a wallet and handed them a twenty-dollar bill. "Here. I'm not hungry. I'll walk to my motel from here."

They dawdled in the bus. Finally, one of them asked, "You sleeping alone tonight, Maria?"

"As I do every night."

"If you get lonely...."

"Never in your wildest dreams," she snapped. She couldn't contain herself. "Try reading a smut book and jacking off." This scum. Who the hell did they think they were?

She jerked open a door. The wind blew the rain like nails into her face. She slammed the door shut and started walking for her motel a couple blocks away.

She had to take it easy on them. She needed them. But, she knew the type. They'd hang on as long as she was paying their way. They claimed to be idealistic anarchists trying to save dear old mommy earth from the greedy, capitalistic pigs, but she knew their idealism would wane if she stopped paying their keep.

She reached the motel and putting a key in the door, entered. She walked into the bathroom and stripped, dropping the wet clothes to the floor. The mirror reflected an image of a woman of thirty-five or so, her wet blonde hair hanging in strings over her bare shoulders. Her body was of athletic build and showed signs of working out. Her skin and dark colored eyes indicated Latin or Spanish blood, in contrast to her blonde hair, which was obviously dyed. The dark patch between her legs was also in sharp contrast to the blonde hair.

She luxuriated in the warmth of the shower a few minutes. Drying off and donning a robe, she thought of her next move. She rummaged in her suitcase and found a picture that went with her everywhere. It was of a man in a military uniform of obvious Spanish descent and an American. They were standing by a bush plane that was painted camouflage colors.

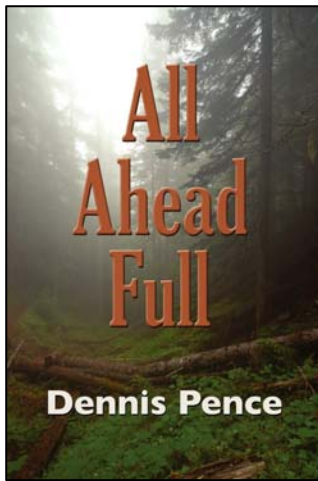
With shaking hands, she stared at the photograph. Determination lit her eyes, then followed by tears. She put the picture away.

She planned her next strike. She must become close to one of the Connelly's. Which meant only Glenn. The brother had a wife and

DENNIS PENCE

would be the hardest to get to. Glenn would be ripe for the taking. An attractive woman such as herself, and a single man that must be at least forty years old, would be like shooting ducks in a gallery. At all costs, she must accomplish her mission. Or, what she thought of as her mission.

A hint of guilt touched her as she considered what she was about to do, and had already done. She quickly dismissed the feeling. With fierce determination fueled by an indomitable, principled spirit, she planned her next move.



A courageous, politically incorrect novel, ALL AHEAD FULL is the story of a timber family's rugged determination to save their logging business in the politically correct Pacific Northwest. With the blustery Washington coast as a backdrop, Glenn Connelly fights for the family empire. He succumbs to the exotic Maria, a beauty whose only goal is to destroy Glenn. But, Maria fails to consider Glenn himself. She falls in love with him.

ALL AHEAD FULL

by Dennis Pence

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