

The actions of one individual can change the course of history. That has always been true, not only in the past, but also right now, today! An example of this truth centers around the beginning of our nation in 1776 and the immediate affect on some of you reading this article.

Phillip Kees, a run-away from Holland, found himself among a motley crew of Hessians, impressed into regimental ranks and sent to fight with the English soldiers against the revolutionaries in the American colonies. It was winter and being a cabinet maker he had been forced to make boats to enable the English General Rahl, encamped on the New Jersey side of the Delaware River, to transport his soldiers across and attack General George Washington on the Pennsylvania side of the river. Washington had retreated across the river, and he had instructed his men to commandeer every boat within 70 miles and take them to the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware. The Hessians under General Rahl therefore had no boats to go after Washington, so Rahl had began an emergency boat building campaign on the New Jersey side. He had found among his Hessian soldiers the young cabinet maker, Phillip Kees, and forced him to join the boat building crew.

“Phillip wasn't very happy being the lone Hollander among the Hessian troops. He was particularly offended by the brutal treatment he witnessed against some of the local farming women and children. When General Rahl called all of his sentries in for a Christmas Day celebration, Phillip saw his chance. He waited a little longer as the troops got drunker and drunker, then headed to his boat works and quietly slipped one of his new boats into the river. He rowed to the other side where he was captured by the Continental Army sentries. He managed to convince them that he had important news for General Washington and was escorted to the Generals tent. He informed Washington that there was a huge party going on across the river, and that even General Rahl was involved. He explained that all the sentries had joined the party, everybody was getting drunk, and nobody was guarding the camp.”\*

General Washington had been looking for a way to turn things around, after the losses the Continental Army had suffered, and this opportunity was the moment he was looking for. On Christmas day, Washington ordered his army to prepare food and fresh flints for their muskets. That evening Washington's army turned out for its evening parade and were told that they were departing on a secret mission. Ordered to be as quiet as possible, they left the camp for McKonkey's Ferry. Washington's plan was to begin the crossing as soon as it was dark enough to conceal their movements on the river, but delays and weather held up the crossing for about ninety minutes.

Many will remember from their history lessons that Washington was among the first of the troops to cross, and the rest of the army followed soon after without significant incident. In the short battle with the drunken enemy, only three Americans were killed and six wounded, while 22 Hessians were killed with 98 wounded. The Americans captured 1000 prisoners and seized muskets, powder, and artillery. What had seemed impossible had been accomplished, all because a young cabinet maker had risked death to inform Washington. New hope rose in the hearts of the Colonists and several victories followed.

“Phillip Kees stayed with General Washington. He was assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pennsylvania Regiment and fought the battles now for the American side. The following winter was spent at Valley Forge, and he suffered along with the rest of the Continental Army. He survived however, and got married in 1797 and raised a family in Pennsylvania. His son, David Kees, married and stayed in Pennsylvania where Phillips grandson, William, was born. William married and moved his family to Agency, Iowa where they had a daughter, Ethyl. When a fire destroyed the farmhouse in Agency, William moved his family to Iola, Kansas where young Ethyl met and fell in love with a neighbor, Eddie Barnhart.”\* Majorie Barnhart was born to this union and she and Virginia Boucher traveled to the Ozarks where, being known as the “Bible Ladies”, they led many of you to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

One man's action, in 1776, led to the successful creation of the United States, and led to many of you knowing Jesus Christ as your Savior. That statement leads to this question: "What will our actions lead to?"

\*The quotes above are from Dale Barnhart, family historian for the Barnhart descendants. If you would like to read his full article on Phillip Kees you may go to:

<http://www.agapeheritagescrolls.net/resources/PHILLIP+KEES+AND+THEFATHER+OF+AMERICA.pdf>

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