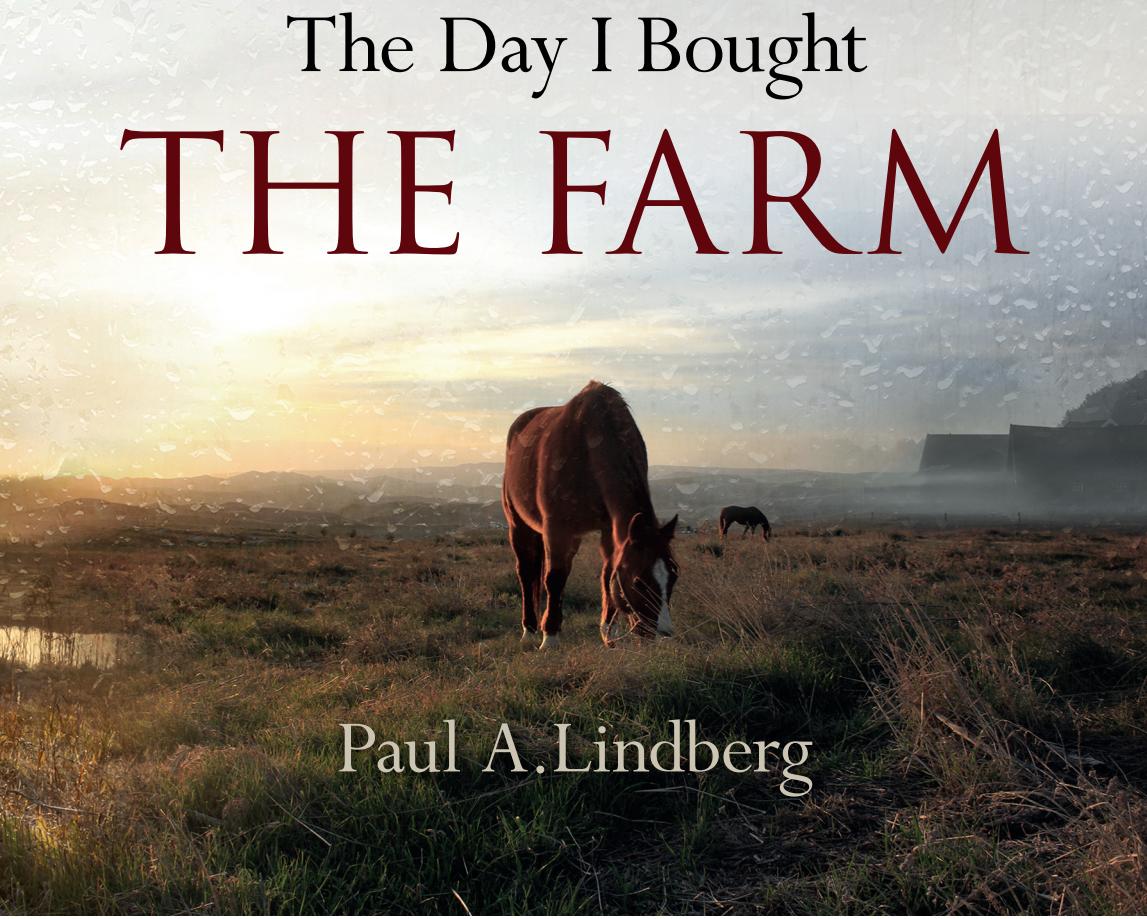




The Day I Bought  
**THE FARM**



Paul A. Lindberg

# **The Day I Bought THE FARM**

A compilation of short stories,  
poems, and essays

Paul A. Lindberg

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## Preface

I got my first computer (a beautiful new Apple II+ with 64K of memory and a single 5 1/2 inch floppy drive) back in 1980. I'll admit, it was just an expensive toy to enjoy with our kidlies. We played Zork, Decathlon, and Oregon Trail – we even programmed our own Zork-like game. It was educational and fun, but that's about it.

Then I seemed to be hearing God telling me to sit down and write for Him. That I did with delight, and I've been writing for Him ever since.

My computers have changed over the years (I'm now on an Apple PowerPC G4 Dual 1.42GHZ with 2 GB memory, a 240GB hard drive, and a CD drive instead of that slow, unreliable floppy drive – quite the upgrade from my Apple II+!), but not my passion for writing.

Now that my latest books have gone public, I have been relaxing and thinking back over the years. I was rather awed at how many things I've written – and how few of them ever actually reached the public. Perhaps I can improve that ratio with this little book.

You'll find here, in no particular order, the best of my writing (not counting the letters or personal exhortations) from the last forty years. Most of it is intensely spiritual (for I'm a rather intense Christian), though not as religious as you might guess. The short stories are often parables like Jesus used to tell His disciples. For example, the first story, *The Day I Bought the Farm*, relates to Matthew 11:12 and 13:44 ff. Some of the other stories also relate to entering the Kingdom of God or developing our love for one another, but I'll leave you, dear Reader, to pray about them to discover their meaning on your own.

I have spent a lot of time in prayer – which I define as listening to God as well as talking to Him. Some of what I've heard from Him (or seen in visions or dreams), I've tried to write down, though bringing it down to earthly words does tend to spoil it somewhat.

So I may write as if I'm hearing directly from God, but I caution you, it is rarely that easy. I'm still human and very fallible, and what I hear from God is certainly mixed with my humanity (and possibly even some of Satan's lies thrown in, too). As proof of that, I'm still finding typos in my books! So enjoy what I write but accept nothing as from God unless and until the Holy Spirit confirms it to your own heart.

If you have read any of my other books, you will know how to do that. My guess is that you would never have picked up this little book in the first place if not for the prompting of the Holy Spirit. As I said in *Volume One of The Feasts of Israel, God's Plan of the Ages*, our God is alive, and He loves to communicate with His people.

My earlier works were actually done by hand, printed out laboriously on engineering graph paper. But my first major work, a book titled *Come Quickly, Lord Jesus*, was originally published in November of 1982 using my venerable Apple II+. That book is now out of print and obsolete. (I actually thought that Jesus would return for His Bride by 1985!) However, looking back all those years, it was a remarkable effort and good training for me.

Now, roughly twenty million keystrokes later, I have to say, it's been a fun and worthwhile journey.

Glad to have you join me.

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## The Day I Bought the Farm

Timothy Stephenson and his son Tim Junior stood together leaning on the fence. It felt good – that few minutes of tranquility after a busy day. They were gazing lovingly across the broad, sweeping expanse of their ranch. Not talking, just enjoying. Their eyes fondled the cattle corral, the lines of fences stretching off into the distance, the weather-worn but sturdy barn, the carefully nurtured grove of fruit trees, and the four milk cows grazing contentedly beyond the pig pen. The chickens were scurrying to their roost under the porch of the comfortable farm house, leaving the pair of geese to scratch around the yard alone. The ducks had gathered to their nests by the bullrushes edging the pond. The sun was painting a spectacular flaming backdrop above the hills far off across the prairie, and the crickets were serenading the sheep as they bedded down for the night.

*Over two thousand head of cattle out there,* Tim Junior was thinking as his sharp eyes scanned the distant hills. “Dad?”

“Yes, son?” His father shifted lazily on the fence rail.

“Is this place going to be mine, someday? After you, uh, after you die, I mean?”

“Do you want it, Tim?” His tall, lanky form had grown suddenly alert.

Tim Junior sensed the change. “Well, sure I want it, but, well, you know... I’d never take it away from you. I’d, uh, I’ll work for you until I can pay you for it.”

His father sighed softly, as if remembering something that hurt him, just a little. Tim waited, wondering if he had said something to upset his dad. The big red orb of the sun touched the horizon, and the fiery brilliance of the high clouds overhead was like eye candy to the soul.

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The silence was just beginning to become unbearable; then the big man smiled at his son. "C'mon, Tim." He reached out and ruffled his hair. "It's time you learned how much this place cost." He turned and together they started for the house.

They passed the cabins Tim's dad and grandpa had built before he was born. The farm hands were hollering and laughing over a card game, and delightful smells were wafting from their cookhouse. The chickens were now all sleeping under the porch of the farm house, but his dad never slowed his pace as he tromped noisily up the steps.

"Maria, we'll be in the den for an hour or so. Okay?" he called to his wife.

"Try to make it less. I've got dinner ready on the stove," she responded pleasantly, as one who had often waited dinner for her hardworking but hungry men.

The two settled back on the overstuffed sofa, and their gaze wandered up to the big painting above the fireplace. It portrayed an old cowboy on horseback. The horse was just a common saddle horse – definitely not the focus of the picture. But the man – he was sitting erect and looking straight out of the painting as if his eyes would pierce right into your soul. His hands were gnarled, and his face was wrinkled and creased, but there was a strength in his appearance that transcended time and age.

"Your grandpa was quite a man..." Timothy began. "I'm sorry you never knew him." He paused, and his eyes grew a bit moist. Then he settled back to tell his story.

"He and Ma moved out here from West Virginia before I was born. The government was giving away free land. He got this twenty-five hundred acre spread just by promising he'd live on it and farm it for at least five years.

## **The Day I Bought the Farm**

“Well, he almost died trying. This was a God-forsaken desert back then, and what with the dust storms, the locusts, the tornados, the cattle rustlers, the lack of good water, and the barren ground, he and Ma had to fight constantly for their very survival.

“When he finally got the irrigation ditch in, things started to improve. He planted that row of trees all along the ditch. They kept the wind from blowing away the topsoil. Then he managed to get a few head of cattle and got some fences up. By then, my three brothers were getting big enough to start helping around the place.

“We built this house. You should have seen the one-room mud house we were living in before! And we got fences clear out to the gulch. Dad was smart; he knew we couldn’t run a cattle ranch without fences. Then we built the barn and got a few more cows, so we could start selling milk as well as beefsteaks. After that, things really seemed to start going right.

“By the time I was sixteen, we had four hundred head of cattle and six good milk cows, and both the orchard and the garden were producing bountifully almost every year. About then, my brother Joe started bugging my dad about his inheritance. I guess he didn’t like living on the farm and he wanted some cash to take off on his own.

“Well, dad got us kids together and told us in no uncertain terms that he wasn’t giving out inheritances. He said all he had was this ranch, and he wasn’t about to split it up just because he had four sons.

“Only one of you is going to get this place, when I get too old to take care of it,’ he stated nonchalantly. ‘But you’ll have to whip me for it.’

“Whip you? Why?” We couldn’t believe it.

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“Just ‘cause I said so. The first one of you to whip me gets the whole spread, and the rest of you can fend fer yourselves!” He stared at us, a slight grin playing at the corners of his mouth, then turned and walked away without another word.

“You can imagine how I felt. I was not only the youngest, but I was also kind of the runt of the family, and I didn’t think I had a chance.

“But not long after that, I saw something that made me change my mind. Ted, that’s my oldest brother, tried to whip Dad over there next to the barn where the pig sty is now. I saw the whole thing. I guess I’d never really realized before how strong Dad was. Ted pounded away at him with all his strength – he was twenty-five, six feet tall, a hundred and eighty pounds, and not an ounce of fat – but Dad didn’t even blink an eye. He just reached out, picked Ted up, and threw him against the barn wall.

“It’s going to be a long, long time before anybody whips Dad,’ I told myself. That was the day I began to train. I read up on muscle building, made myself some weights, and started working out every day up in the hay loft. I started running everywhere I went to build up my wind, and I was careful with my diet.

“A couple years went by, but I kept at it. I don’t know what it was – something in me kept driving me. I grew to want this farm more than anything else in the world.

“Joe, my second oldest brother, went off to the city. He got a job and got married. He never did make a try at Dad for the farm. The other two both did, a couple times I think, in those next few years. They didn’t have a chance. All those years of fighting the elements had made Dad as tough as nails, and my brothers were just too soft.

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“But finally I felt I was ready. I’d really changed a lot. Not just the weights and the running, but I’d also studied boxing from a schoolmate’s father and had practiced for many hours on a punching bag I made. I was twenty-one and in the prime of my life. I was quick, while Dad was getting old and slowing down.

“I hated the thought of hitting Dad, but I really wanted this ranch. My brothers didn’t have the motivation to really fight for it, but I did. I had grown to sincerely love this place, but I think my brothers only wanted it for its money value.

“So one day I confronted Dad over by the garden. ‘I don’t want to hurt you, but I really want this farm,’ I said.

“He threw his hoe off to one side and stood there, waiting. To this day I don’t know what I did wrong, but I don’t think I ever landed a single punch. When I woke up, I was in bed with an ice bag on my head, and I wished I’d never woke up. I felt like every bone in my body had been crushed, and I was afraid to move for fear I’d ripple like a bowl of jelly.

“At first I was angry, but you just couldn’t stay angry at Dad. He never did hold a grudge past sundown, and he treated me like it had never happened. In fact, it was after that I grew to respect my dad more than ever. I finally realized how he had gotten so strong, and I really began working with him on this place.

“We built those cabins for the farm hands back then. Dad and I did most of it. I remember working ’til I was ready to drop, but even then I couldn’t outwork Dad. I continued with the weights and all, but I really pushed myself to keep up with Dad. I tried to do everything he did only more, and harder, and better, and longer.

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“A few more years went by, and finally I knew it was time. Age was really beginning to tell on Dad, while with all that extra work I had hardened like fine steel. I could see my two older brothers eyeing him, too, and I knew I didn’t dare wait too long. I worked and planned and trained with a fierceness that amazed even me. And I waited and plotted for just the right moment.

“It came suddenly. Dad had had an exhausting day taking care of some wolves that had been getting through his fences at the calves, and then he’d had to settle a fight among the hired help. When the hired hands fought, it wasn’t any Sunday school picnic, either, let me tell you! Anyway, Dad was worn out, and discouraged, too, while I was fresh and in perfect shape, having spent my day getting lumber and materials in town.

“I met him as he was walking up toward the house for supper. ‘I want this farm, and I’m going to whip you for it!’ I said, and I gritted my teeth and got ready for the first punch. Dad never paused in his pace. He walked straight toward me with his eyes piercing right through me, just like in that picture up there, and the instant before he was in range of my fist, he kicked, hard, right at my groin. As I began to bend over in pain, his knee came up into my chest and his doubled fists came down over the back of my neck, and that’s the last I remembered ’til sometime the next evening.

“When I woke up, I really scared my mom, because before I knew it I was screaming in pain. I couldn’t help it; the pain was indescribable. Besides, I was really angry this time. When Dad came in, I yelled at him about fighting dirty and how unfair that was and a few other things that I’m too ashamed to repeat.

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“Dad never even apologized. He simply said that if I really wanted the farm, I was going to have to whip him, and that he’d never said anything about it being fair.

“That was the real turning point in my life. It wasn’t that I hated Dad; I didn’t. Like I said, you couldn’t hate him. He was too good a man and too good a father. But I started to burn in my desire to own this ranch. It was mine, and nothing in heaven or on earth would keep me from it. I finally realized how much Dad loved this place, I suppose because I began to love it with the same intensity.

“Jim (my third brother, four years older than me) laughed at me. ‘You may as well go get yourself a wife and a job in the city, like Joe.’ he said. ‘It’ll be twenty years before you’ll be able to whip Dad.’ I smiled and said nothing; in my heart the ranch was already mine.

“It wasn’t long after that, maybe two or three months, when it happened. I was up in the hay loft, pitching hay fiercely up away from the door, when I saw Dad walk by down below. I dropped my pitchfork and leaped out the door, like a leopard from a tree. I came from behind Dad, and he had no warning at all. He crumpled under the impact of my hundred and ninety pounds from fifteen feet above him. I guess I sorta’ lost my head, but I was kicking him in the ribs and jumping on his chest, sobbing uncontrollably the whole time, when Ted and Jim both came running in and pulled me off him.

“‘The farm is mine!’ I shouted between my tears.

“‘It’s not either!’ shouted Jim. ‘You cheated and jumped him from behind. Look at the hay on you, and there’s your pitchfork in the loft where you dropped it.’

“I just knelt with my face in the dirt and bawled, the violence of my emotions had so overcome me.

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“I vaguely heard Dad telling my brothers, ‘...I just said you had to whip me – I never said it had to be fair...’ And then I felt him grab my shoulder.

“Stand up like a man and look me in the eye!” he roared.

“I wiped my eyes with my grimy hands, slowly got to my feet, and looked at him. He looked terrible. His face was already getting puffy and turning purple, blood was coming out of one corner of his mouth, and he was holding his side like he had some broken ribs. I just gritted my teeth, blinked back the tears, stared right back into those piercing eyes and spat out, ‘The farm is mine!’

“Then I noticed, through the puffiness, the twinkle in his eyes. ‘Yes.’ He spoke quietly yet with a surprising intensity. ‘I’m proud of you, my son. The farm is yours, all yours, free.’

“All of a sudden, it hit me what Dad had done. I staggered back away from his grip on my shoulder.

“Free?!” I yelled. ‘Free?!’ I surprised myself at how angry I had become. I yelled in his face, ‘Do you realize how much I gave for this farm? I gave my blood, sweat, and tears! I gave my time, my effort, every ounce of...’

“I know,’ Dad interrupted softly, ‘You gave everything you had. Just like I did thirty years ago.’ And before I could respond, he turned on his heel and strode off toward the house, limping only slightly. ‘C’mon,’ he called over his shoulder. ‘Let’s get that deed signed off.’”

There was a long pause. Then Maria, who had evidently been listening through the study door, called out, “Come ‘n get it, you men. It’s on the table and gettin’ cold.”