

Modest Trucker Says God Used Him To Nab Northeast Sniper Suspects

By finding the alleged killers, a praying truck driver named Ron Lantz did what the best U.S. surveillance powers couldn't. Truck driver Ron Lantz, 62, believes an impromptu prayer meeting led to his spotting the two Washington, sniper suspects who allegedly had killed 10 people before Lantz saw the men at an interstate rest area in Maryland.

The arrests of suspects John Allen Muhammad and John Lee Malvo probably saved lives. Law enforcement officials claim the pair had been plotting their next attack. But that doesn't bring Lantz much comfort.

"I'd liked to have had it ended before that," lamented Lantz, a committed Christian. Still, he insists that God orchestrated the men's capture.

Lantz, a trucker for more than 30 years, would listen to talk radio during his regular haul from Kentucky to Maryland. He was horrified at the news of each sniper attack. During one of these trips he decided to do something about it.

"I was on a CB radio talking to drivers," he told Christian men's magazine New Man, "and I asked them if they would follow me into this rest area and have a little prayer service about our country and about the snipers.

"Lo and behold, about 50 [truckers] were there. It took about

58 minutes to have the prayer meeting. I just thought these people had to be caught some way or the other and that somebody was going to catch them.”

The next Wednesday—Oct. 23—Lantz was called in to work on his day off. Looking back, he can see God’s hand in the events that followed.

That day, he was stopped by police three separate times but was not ticketed. With each stop he was delayed a few minutes while the cops checked his paperwork. “I’ve been driving a truck for 36 years and that’s never happened before,” he noted.

The same day, Lantz heard a description of the snipers’ car.

“I got down next to Baltimore on [Interstate] 95. They described the car and the people in it and the license-plate number. I wrote it down.”

On his return trip to Kentucky he pulled into a rest area on Interstate 70 in Frederick County, Md., and immediately recognized the Chevrolet Caprice the police were looking for. Muhammad was asleep inside the car, and Malvo was resting on a park bench.

Lantz immediately placed an emergency call and waited for the police to arrive. An officer who responded told Lantz to use his rig to block the exit. Lantz then got on his citizens band radio and asked another trucker to block the entrance. He said he wasn’t worried about his own safety.

"I wasn't scared," Lantz said in his thick, Kentucky drawl. "I mean, the person I am, I'm not scared of nothin' 'cause the good Lord just put me there to do what I did."

Until 1997 Lantz had stayed away from the church. That year he promised his dying adult son that he would commit his life to serving God. According to Larry Dillon, Lantz's pastor today at Central Church of the Nazarene in Fort Wright, Ky., Lantz has since devoted his life to God's service: braving snowy roads to deliver food, clothing and school supplies to needy families; leading the church's men's ministry; and teaching Bible classes.

"He's not afraid to get involved and, man, he's got a heart of gold," Dillon said. "He's always out working and trying to build the church, trying to build the men's ministry. He just makes himself available. He's a servant for the Lord, and God will use a servant."

Lantz didn't realize that hours before he spotted the alleged snipers his home church had held a prayer meeting of their own and had prayed for the killers' capture. "Little did we know the Lord was going to use one of the leaders of our men's ministry to be the one to identify those snipers," Dillon said.

Fifteen minutes after Lantz made his 911 call, the area was swarming with police. They used a flash grenade to disorient the suspects before grabbing them both.

In his column for The Wall Street Journal, Brendan Miniter wrote: "Mr. Lantz offers us a simple but powerful story, one that reveals an underlying strength in American society that

the media often neglect: Religious character matters. It's no coincidence that the best defenders of our domestic security are also turning out to be some of our most upstanding, moral citizens."

Dillon agreed.

"God uses common people like you and me for uncommon things," he said. "We had the Air Force, the FBI and CIA, and the best we had available. We had surveillance planes and the best and the latest technology that we had as a country. But God used Ron, a truck driver, to spot those individuals and to bring this thing to a conclusion."

Lantz hesitates to say how Muhammad and Malvo should be punished. "What punishment?" he asked. "I'll keep that thought to myself. It wouldn't be very nice."

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