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HOW GRANDMA BECAME A 'DOOMSDAY PREPPER'

As a college-educated professional in the field of emergency management, and a sensible grandmother to boot, I have looked with a jaundiced eye at the sensationalistic doomsday predictions that are peppering the cable networks and being cranked out by the dozen by the Hollywood machine. In 2012 you cannot scan the channel guide without coming across at least a half dozen of them. Not just on Chiller and the SyFy network as you might expect, but on the history channel and National Geographic and the Science channel.

They are all busy issuing dire predictions about everything from global warming and melting polar ice caps to the abrupt end of the ancient Mayan calendar. From the predictions of Nostradamus, super volcanoes, electro-magnetic pulses, solar flares and pandemics, to the religious foretelling's of the book of Revelation, the anti-Christ, the Rapture and let's not forget Hollywood's latest craze: a zombie apocalypse with the dead rising to devour the living.

In the event of a solar flare we will all be done for in short order, as for the rest of it, I had determined to dismiss it with a grain of salt. What then would make this sensible, educated, grandmother go from looking askance at these dramatic portrayals of doom to actually jumping aboard this "crazy train"? It wasn't fear of zombies. Being married to Len Barnhart, the successful author of the first in a series of zombie novels that set off the recent craze, we have given more thought to what to do in *that* unlikely event than anyone in the state, if not the country. It was a merely average piece of

Hollywood fiction about a pandemic, which effectively portrayed our government's vast incapability to handle an epic disaster(as we've seen firsthand) as well as man's startling inhumanity to man as they turn on each other and degenerate to the basest creatures imaginable, determined to survive at any cost. Though it was merely a movie, art imitates life, and there are endless examples to prove that. I think back to Katrina and the horrors that we witnessed from afar as looting and outright murder prevailed in the deluged city.

I found myself questioning what might happen to me and my family if some disastrous event should take place. Though we would certainly fare better than city dwellers that have become so dependent on their modern conveniences, computers, take-out food, and municipal water supply, still without the things that we all take for granted these days, we would be in pretty dire straits. So it's all aboard the crazy train for this rural mountain dweller. Within 24 hours I had begun to stock up on flats of bottle water, dried and canned goods , candles and lamp oil, batteries and last but not least, for the first time in my fifty-plus years, a handgun and ammunition.

As I push my cart up and down the aisles of the local Big Lots store with the strains of Patsy Cline's "Crazy" echoing in my mind, I take my first foray into the world of a 'Doomsday Prepper.' I have searched the internet for tips and tricks and find to my surprise that there seems to be an endless source of information on the subject. Everything from how to collect and purify your water supply or grow your own food, to where to buy space in complex [underground pods](#) for sums beginning at \$120,000 per person and up.

There are many sources of bulk foods and MRE's like [thereadystore.com](#) and [PrepareToday.com](#), though you can bypass some of the expense associated with these specialty sites by simply stocking up on canned goods, freeze dried groceries and grain staples. For example, in my simple attempt to build up stores I have large (gallon) jars of dried beans, pasta, and dried fruit. Sealed in these

jars, they can last for a very long time. I buy what is on sale and rotate my stock. For instance I use a jar of peanut butter every two months, so I stock up four jars with an expiration date of a year. When I have used a jar and bought a replacement for it I add it to the backend of my stock and take the next jar in line for daily use. This keeps my supplies fresh and not in danger of expiration. Flats of bottled water can likewise be rotated and there are many large volume storage containers for water as well.

Even if you opt to do the majority of store building on your own, there are many helpful, instructional videos on The Ready Store™ website, covering subjects from water preservation and MRE's to the necessary tools for a prolonged survival situation, right up to what they title their: "Ultimate Zombie Survival Kit". Jeff and Amy Davis began this business less than a decade ago, assembling 72 hour survival kits in the basement of their Utah home and selling them online through their website. The business has now grown to service over a million customers and encompasses two enormous warehouses of emergency preparedness supplies in Provo, Utah. The business has experienced a huge upsurge in the last two years which more than tripled their customer base, which includes individuals, companies, and government agencies. Jeff attributes this to heightened awareness of the potential for a catastrophic event, brought on by recent media attention to that possibility. (interview)

Encouraged by the knowledge I gained thus far, I am taking the opportunity now to learn some necessary skills like home canning. I can buy produce in season and can my own vegetables and sauces. Anyone can learn to grow their own produce if they have a small patch of land at their disposal. Even city dwellers can have small patio gardens. In the event of a large scale disaster every resource you have at your disposal will be invaluable.

I look at it this way: being prepared cannot possibly hurt and the reality is it may very well save my life or at the very least make me more comfortable and prepared in the case of a short-term emergency. While I am not ready to take out a second mortgage on my home to secure space in a

bunker, I don't mind a little time on the practice range learning to shoot. After all, if it's a zombie hoard that ushers in the end of humanity I need to be able to shoot them in the head. That takes no small amount of practice.

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