



### **Text Version of Audio Story: Choice**

George had been chased west by his enemy over the Pennsylvania frontier. But, now, he was ready to turn around and have at them one last time. If this didn't work, if he couldn't deliver a decisive blow to enemy troops, it would be all over for George.

There was a major obstacle in his way — a river. He would have to get over it, through it, around it, across it, somehow. It was the dead of winter and his critics said he was nuts. The water in that river would freeze a man solid. George had little choice. Everything was riding, — everything — on getting across that river. Not only were events of historic proportion contingent upon getting to the other side of that river, George's very life depended on it.

He was a wealthy farmer. Everything he owned would be lost if he couldn't get across that river, including his life. Surely, he realized, there was no place left to run. If the enemy caught up with him, they would hang him by his neck from the nearest tree. There was one thing left to do — stop running and start fighting. Take the fight to the enemy. But getting across that river, yeah, how was he going to do that?

On Christmas Eve 1776, in the dark of the night in a blinding storm — in what I can only describe as an undertaking of epic proportion — not only did George cross that river, he took 2,400 American patriots with him. On that night, George and his ragtag band of freedom fighters, many of them without the basic, such as shoes and coats, many who hadn't eaten in days, crossed that river. On that night, Christmas Eve 1776, General George Washington and his men crossed the Delaware bent for a showdown with the Hessians, the hired guns of the British Army.

Once across that river, Washington and his men tactfully marched for Trenton, New Jersey, where the enemy was enjoying a little R&R. They were confident that by now the American Army had probably broken up, with deserters running barefoot for home. The enemy soldiers were celebrating Christmas, drinking beer, dancing. The cunning General Washington waited for the dark of night. He attacked. And in a matter of 45 minutes, American forces killed 100 enemy soldiers and took another 900 prisoner. It was a decisive victory. It was the beginning of a turnaround for the American cause.

The British Army and its garrison of German hired guns, the Hessian force, were considered to be the finest, most elite fighting machine in the world. And yet, the one thing that military trainers obviously never bargained on was that someday their elite fighting men would have to go up against the most powerful weapon that can be used in war — a man fighting with his heart, a man fighting for his freedom.

Today, some 200-odd years later, the place where Washington and his men crossed the Delaware is preserved as a national historic site. I often wonder if those brave men fighting for their freedom, even men as bright as Washington, if they possibly, in their wildest thoughts, could have ever imagined how they were changing the destiny of the world.

Critics said the idea of America, one man, one vote, was flawed and that it would never work. We have our problems. But the American ideal is still the greatest idea in the history of the world. Before you choose to be anything, choose to be an American; for, as an American, you can choose to be anything.

From somewhere behind the radio with the music of Johnny X, I'm the American Storyteller.