

# ***Braveheart*: Freedom for the Brave**

by Daniel Borchers

August 7, 1995

Mel Gibson's epic and engaging *Braveheart* concerns courage and conviction, freedom and tyranny. Gibson's true-life character, William Wallace, is a larger-than-life freedom fighter who literally changes the course of history.

Wallace, desiring to live a simple life in liberty, was compelled by political machinations and the murder of his wife to lead a revolt of his fellow Scotsmen against the tyrannical rule of England. William's ultimate death, a sacrifice for freedom foreshadowing Nathan Hale's, gave conception to a freedom which would be born but nine years later.

Like all great war movies, the battle scenes in *Braveheart* illustrate the insanity of war. Bloody deaths and horrid disfigurements were the result of crude military technology not much improved by World War I trench-warfare. So, why do men go to war? Are they insane? While recognizing the carnage of the battlefield, *Braveheart* reveals deeper truths. First, there *are* some things worth fighting for, among them, freedom, family, country. Our Founders would have added, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The horrors of war cause some to avoid conflict at all cost. A second truth, all too often ignored in politics and diplomacy, concerns the folly of compromise – incremental enslavement – aptly demonstrated by the treachery of the Scottish nobles who compromised with the enemy for political purposes or financial gain.

This illustrates a third truth: ruling elites are often willing to “sacrifice” the little people for “pragmatic” reasons. Whether for a title to nobility or land, or a seat at the table of high political office, power does tend to corrupt, principles do tend to be re-prioritized, and the people (to whom they are accountable) tend to be overlooked. Will the Republican Revolution of 1994 repeat the folly of the Scottish nobles? Or will it emulate the unwavering purpose of William Wallace?

Those quick to compromise often overlook the fourth truth: sometimes compromise *isn't* possible. There are “irreconcilable differences” between tyranny and freedom. These are two mutually-exclusive worldviews which *cannot* be at peace. Either one or the other will prevail. Ronald Reagan and the Cold Warriors understood this. Though the Soviet Union has collapsed, its ideology is alive and well in America, intent upon achieving what Mother Russia couldn't. Will we protect the liberty entrusted to us by the Founding Fathers, or succumb to a socialist tyranny which has destroyed dozens of nations in the 20th century?

William received sage counsel from his father: his heart is free, he should have the courage to follow it. And follow it he did. Wallace would agree that if you own the whole world but have not freedom, you have nothing. For *Braveheart*, freedom and courage are first cousins. Freedom nourishes, and is dependent upon, courage.

*Braveheart* reminds us that freedom is one of those precious things which must never be taken for granted because it can all too easily be taken away. Freedom must be appreciated, loved, embraced. We neglect its preservation at the cost of our souls.

All those who love liberty can look to *Braveheart* – to a Man Who Would Be Free. What price freedom? The death of freedom is spelled out in complacency and compromise. Through vigilance and courage we

*can* keep freedom alive. How much is *your* freedom worth to *you*? If *you* won't fight for it, who will?

### **Chronology of True Story Events**

- 1272 Edward I Longshanks begins his reign in England. He is called Edward, hammer of the Scots.
- 1294 England declares war on France.
- 1295 Scotland allies itself with France.
- 1296 Scotland is without a king. Edward I defeats the Scots at Dunbar, and takes Stone of Destiny from Scone.
- 1297 William Wallace avenges murder of his wife, kills English sheriff of Lanark, leads a Scottish rebellion against England and wins battle at Stirling Bridge.
- 1298 Scottish nobles betrayed Wallace at Falkirk.
- 1299 The Scots take Stirling Castle.
- 1304 Wallace is imprisoned.
- 1305 Wallace is executed.
- 1306 Robert the Bruce begins his reign (lasting till 1329) with his crowning at Scone.
- 1307 Edward I Longshanks dies.
- 1314 Scotland gains its independence with victory at Bannockburn.
- 1329 Robert the Bruce dies of leprosy, as did his father.
- 1337 The Hundred Years' War between England and France begins.