HOT PURSUIT

KEN BURTON
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What others have said about Hot Pursuit

“I cried and cried. No other testimony has ever affected me to tears like yours!! Oh, what a beautiful testimony! So many parts of your story I could relate to such as the running and giving it all up for Christ. The best part of the whole story that touched me the most was where you talked about holding back the tears and realizing that God was perusing you. So powerful and heart wrenching! Your story reminds me of Paul’s in the Bible.”

Susan (Ex-Escort)

“I found your story... It's quite possibly the most moving testimony I've ever heard. I'm a Christian from the south side of Chicago. I haven't taken the hard road like you, but I know others that have. God moves in incredible, powerful, mysterious ways.”

Jim

“What an awesome testimony! As I read the part where Sharon came to your aid when you were discouraged, I was praising Jesus with tears running down my face. Those of us who love the Lord can never hear too much of what He is STILL doing! Thank you for sharing.”

Gail

“It’s so amazing what God can do. How he can touch the person you’d least expect the most. Isn't it awesome how he can save those who think they are too far gone and don’t have a thing or feel they aren’t worth a thing? Reading your story helped set me back on my feet.”

Selina.

“WOW! What can I say? I am not stunned or surprised, as I know nothing is impossible with God but He sure went a long way with you and He made sure you didn’t miss His salvation. Hallelujah! What a God! God didn’t just open the narrow gate for you; He almost knocked down the fences on either side of it. May he use you to save others.”

Charlie
“Loved your change of heart Mr. Burton. God Bless you...I go to church and read and study the Bible all the time...something I thought I would never do.”  

Nathan

“Thank you so much for taking the time to share your testimony. It's very encouraging.”  

Phakama
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MEMOIRS
OF
KEN BURTON
CHAPTER 1

Starting Point

My father was forty-six years old when he married my mother, an eighteen year old. Having been raped at the age of fifteen by her stepfather, my mother carried some deep, emotional scars. Although she never discussed this with me, I can imagine what this did to her relationship with her mother. When the stepfather placed most of the blame on her, she was left isolated from her remaining parent, and never recovered from this atrocity. This forced incest produced a blind and intellectually disabled daughter. My mother carried the shame, guilt, and pain of this ordeal till the day she died. It was a desperate inner cry for help that brought her response to my father’s offer of marriage. It was a marriage destined to fail.

A year into the marriage, I was born and a year later I had a brother, Dale. As a young child, I remember attending church, but the older I grew, the less frequent those visits became. We grew up in poverty, but not hungry. Our clothes were essentially second hand, in need of repair, and almost always dirty. Both parents worked long hours which left Dale and I to fend for ourselves. The overwhelming mental burdens my mother carried from her childhood, coupled with two children to raise and a husband old enough to have been her father, made life more than she could cope with. I know my mother loved me and desired to be a better parent, but was incapable.

Between the physical strain of providing for a family and the mental strain of a failing marriage, my father was always exhausted and seldom found any enjoyment in life. Owing to that, we rarely did
things together as a family. Although he never told me, I know my father loved me.

Personal hygiene was unknown to my brother and me. When, and if, we awoke for school, the house was empty. Without parental guidance, we did the best we knew how. Wearing yesterday’s clothing again was common. The use of a toothbrush, comb and soap were habits acquired later in life. We also learned, having a mouth full of cavities was not normal. I’m sure we stunk but were unaware of that fact. Bedwetting was the norm. When bedtime approached, we would place old clothes, a blanket or anything handy over the wet area and sleep on it. If we remembered in the morning, we would hang the wet things throughout the room to dry, so they could be used the next night again. If we forgot to hang up the wet stuff for a couple of days, we would occasionally find maggots in the bed. I detested having them in my bed.

Being not only impoverished but likewise disheveled invited problems at school. On a rare occasion, a teacher would have sympathy for me. Most likely it was disgust or barely concealed hatred by teacher and student alike. People generally kept their distance. Upon exiting the grade school building on one occasion, I found an older student holding Dale, intending to harm him. Owing to a size difference, I buried my teeth into the arm of the guy that restrained my brother. When he became loose and started running, I followed close behind. The next day, the assailant’s arm was bandaged and in a sling while he expressed his displeasure at having received tetanus shots. There was no further altercation from him after that.

Grade school was comprised of white teachers and students with the exception of one black man. He pushed a broom through the halls when we were in classes. One day I found the door of his closet-sized room ajar and I peeked inside. He looked up and said “Hello.” I began greeting him daily and thought of him as a friend. It was rare being treated like a person. It gave me a feeling I was unaccustomed to. During a visit, he mentioned the ball game he would like to hear that
day, so I offered to lend him my beat-up transistor radio. He was downcast when he returned it the next day. My new friend had been informed that his actions were improper and he would have no future need to borrow from students. After that, he was always busy when I came by. Understanding that situation did not require a high IQ.

My childhood provided a fair share of stitches and psychological trauma. A few stitches were required when I sliced my hand open. Neighborhood kids attempted to scare me one night. Two of them found a foot long piece of curb left behind from street repair. They dragged it up the steps behind an apartment building and waited for me. The idea to push it off the side of a step and land in front of me was not the best plan to carry out in darkness. Their timing was off. They pushed it into my head and it rolled down my back. Blood covered me when I reached home and wrapped the tablecloth around my head. My parents and I were panicking as we raced to the hospital. I was still trembling when the doctor finished the last stitch.

My parents hired babysitters on a few occasions. They were concerned about Dale and me getting into trouble after school. There was one young girl that I used to watch bathe through the bathroom keyhole. Another one claimed to have had some mental problems. Sometimes she ran around the house with very little clothing. A couple of the others were thieves.

The most traumatic experience caused by a babysitter happened near the age of ten. She was about eighteen and not overly burdened with good morals. She and my father had a dispute over hours worked and money owed. My parents went to bed. She called her boyfriend from the motorcycle gang. He stormed into the house and woke me by barging into their bedroom. He yelled and threatened to kill my father if she wasn’t paid immediately. I arose and realized, there was no help I could offer by entering into the midst of that situation. Remembering my father’s .22 caliber rifle, I went to get it. It was unloaded, so I looked frantically for bullets. One was all I needed to end the intruder’s life. Though I was young, there would not have been a
moment’s hesitation to pull the trigger. There were no bullets to be found. I had enough intelligence to seek help instead of making threats that I could not keep with an unloaded rifle.

It was the middle of a Michigan winter. I raced barefooted and underdressed to seek help. The ground was ice and snow making it difficult to reach the nearest neighbor. After banging frantically on their door, they awoke to tell me they had no phone. It was freezing cold as I continued down the block a few houses to where a neighbor kid lived. When I had awakened his parents, telling of the danger, they put me on the phone. The police were dispatched and I was told it was too dangerous to return home. My feet hurt and I was cold. They wrapped me in a blanket and tried to calm me. The man was confident the police had arrived and went to verify as much. Eventually, the situation was defused and I returned home safely. I’m confident my parents intended to, but no one ever thanked me nor mentioned what I did.

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There was one thing I never thanked my parents for, that I should have. They attended a small Pentecostal church sporadically throughout my childhood. They had interest, but no commitment. The services were lively at times and I still remember the words to many of the songs that were sung. We arrived one Sunday evening to find a half dozen men sitting in the front row of seats. Reverend Lester Gray said, “Some of our black brethren have come to sing for us tonight.” The least of my surprises were the bright, yellow suits they wore. I’d never heard acapella before and found it stunning. How could six guys sing different words at the same time without music and sound better than singers who used a whole band? It was completely enthralling. That was the beginning of a love for music that would continue for the remainder of my life.

My father could not be accurately described as a joyful individual and as far as I could tell, had no real friends. Our family would visit one of his siblings yearly, at most, and stop at the Dairy Queen twice
as often. Other than that our social calendar was never cluttered. It was surprising to hear him say we were going to the grand opening of a grocery store to see someone. That day I met the former world heavyweight boxing champion, Jack Dempsey. He had six losses out of eighty-two fights.

***

As I entered my teens, a heart attack claimed the life of my father. There was pathetically little in common between us and I never really knew him. We did have conversations, but they were shallow. Now, I would never know him. His passing left an emptiness in my life and this proved to be a difficult adjustment to make.

Three months later, while still trying to accept the loss of my father, there was another death. Tony, a slightly older friend, left our home one night to return to his. A driver failed to see him walking on the side of the road and he was killed instantly.

Tony’s family chose the same funeral home where I had spent many hours grieving over my father’s body. Returning to that funeral home brought back a flood of sorrow. It was difficult passing the room where my father had been.

Matters had not become easier as I walked up to the coffin and looked at Tony’s body. His grief-stricken mother approached me and began yelling, “Why couldn’t it have been you, instead of my son? Why not you?”

It was not my fault nor my choice to make. She made me feel awful and I turned around and left quickly. Being disliked and rejected was something I had grown accustomed to, but I lack the words to explain what that did to me. Life had not been kind to me and it did not appear that things would improve.

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The use of a nickname made identification more difficult. If the police enquired as to who started the fight, or who stole the car, the
response would be, Flat Nose Freddie or Cool Breeze, etc. The name I chose was Zip and there are some who still call me that today.

All respect for authority was abandoned while I continued on a path that grew worse. Before leaving school during the ninth grade, I had befriended a Mexican guy named Antone & his brother, Choppy. We frequently attended dances at the Russellville ballroom and consumed alcohol routinely.

During a bout of drinking in my basement, we nearly came to blows. The concept of honor or a fair fight was foreign. I latched on to a carpenter’s saw and prepared to swing. Some equally drunk bodies moved between us and there was no fight. Later I was asked, “Would you have used that on me?” I remained silent, perhaps explaining why that friendship never recovered.
CHAPTER 2

Pipeline, the Weasel & Cook County Jail

My mother relocated to a large older home hoping it would function as a boarding house. The ensuing parade of undesirables was endless. The thieves, whores, alcoholics, perverts and moochers provided enough grief and chaos to fill a book.

There was K.K.Kenny, who arrived straight from prison, after serving time for breaking and entering. Having been fully rehabilitated by the state of Michigan, he was an excellent role model. At least until he and a guy named Dodger Man decided to rob a small mom and pop convenient store. It was convenient for them because it was across the street from Dodger Man's house. Once inside the store, they were disappointed by the complete lack of cash. Not wanting to leave emptyhanded, especially after having committed a felony to gain entrance, they returned to Dodger Man's house for a wheelbarrow. They spent the remainder of the night moving wheelbarrow loads of merchandise to Dodger Man's garage. They were occupied the following week, smoking cigars while selling cigarettes, beer, and Mogen David Wine. Dodger Man had removed his glove to blow his nose and left a perfect fingerprint on the beer cooler. The state of Michigan decided further rehabilitation was needed. It should be pointed out that they went to prison with the dubious distinction of having made the largest grocery haul in the history of Flint, Michigan.
Manny the Mooch was another of our infamous boarders. He was a thirty year old sex predator who had recently been compelled to relocate quickly. The friend he had been living with, discovered an affair in progress with his wife. Manny’s life was spent pursuing women and dodging employment. If female support was unavailable, he would pawn anything he could find or steal. My decency prevents a detailed description of his exploits. He was another of the excellent role models my life was filled with.

Manny’s car presented my best opportunity to spend time with the opposite sex. My line was, “If your girlfriend wants to come along, I got a friend with a car”. A bizarre incident occurred when I made him a date with one of my girlfriends’ sisters. Every time I went to visit my girlfriend, I saw her sister lounging around the house in pajamas and a housecoat. One evening I asked if she wanted to meet a guy. She agreed and I gave Manny her phone number. They had a few conversations and decided to meet. Manny picked the right clothes, shaved and combed his hair repeatedly in preparation for their highly anticipated meeting. He splashed on some smell good stuff and went out the door. Within thirty minutes he returned.

“What happened?” I asked? He appeared stunned as he looked at us and said, “She’s dead”. Apparently, an illness I was unaware of had claimed her life after their last conversation.

A current fad for meeting people then was called Pipeline. If you called a busy phone number on a landline, you could shout one word at a time between the buzzing sounds. Conversations were slow. You then gave out your phone number, one number at a time, when a potential candidate was located. Pipeline provided an unending supply of dates.

Manny and I went to pick up our dates one evening. We arrived at the meeting place and the girls had a small debate before Lolita climbed into the back seat with me. They were young and it seems they both thought Manny was too old for either of them. I started
seeing Lolita often and she soon confessed her name was Pame. Her next confession was a little harder to deal with. She was pregnant.

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Her mother flew into a rage. She was yelling “I showed you how to keep from getting pregnant. You’re gonna get an abortion! We’re getting out of here!” Her mother then grabbed her by the hair and tried to drag her to the car. That family feud ended quickly when her enraged mother drove away without her.

We were married against her mom's demands and stayed at my mother’s house till our son, Kenny, was born. Pame’s mother proved to be the mother-in-law from hell. She convinced Pame that I would never seek employment or take care of her till I was removed from my mother and friends. She persuaded her daughter to accompany her to Rockford, Illinois, and see if I would follow. A week after Pame gave me her address, I was in Rockford, seeking employment.

National Lock hired me and I located an apartment within walking distance. A couple we knew from Flint called and said they would like to visit. We gladly offered to let them stay with us.

Shortly after that half of the couple showed up at our door. He said they had split up and wanted to know if he could stay with us. My wife was not working outside the home because Kenny was still young.

A few days later my neighbor passed by me and said, “You need to keep an eye on your wife.” I was startled. There had been no pressure on me to marry her. Pame’s mother envisioned an abortion before leaving Flint without me. I disagreed and said I would marry her and try to do what was right. The fact that I had followed her to Rockford should have shown her I cared. I kept steady employment and brought my paychecks home. I should have known better than to trust someone again. She left, leaving our son behind with me. Considering the things I’ve done, I have no moral basis to criticize Pame. However it was painful to see our marriage ended that way.
Three friends accompanied me when I left Rockford to settle a score with a man in Chicago. We drove around for a while and determined that Chicago is a big city. We had no hope of locating my former friend without better directions. My accomplices laughed when we saw a small police precinct and I went inside for help.

We followed the cop’s instructions and continued driving till we realized there were no other cars on the streets. We were lost again and drove into a gas station to get better directions and found it was closed. In fact, taking a look around, we realized everything was closed. Wait a minute. Businesses closed, no people on the sidewalk, no cars in the street, and the only sound was distant firecrackers. What was going on? Was this all part of a cheap science fiction movie?

***

I got out of the car to use the phone in front of the station when nearly every cop in Chicago pounced on us. They were in no mood for games as they tore our car apart and searched us repeatedly. They found my gun. This seemed so ridiculous we could not understand it.

If we had been listening to the radio, we might have heard about a race riot in progress. Riots broke out in Chicago sparked in part by the assassination of Martin Luther King. More than 48 hours of rioting left 11 dead, 48 wounded, 90 policemen injured, and 2,150 people arrested. There were 36 major fires reported between 4:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. alone. We were in a police wagon with an overweight cop and a shotgun (he had the shotgun) before we realized what was going on. What a time to arrive in Chicago!

I seriously doubt Cook County Jail has ever been more overcrowded. Processing over two thousand prisoners could not have been an easy task. After many dreadful hours, we received a bowl of beans with some small stones mixed in. Chicago's finest realized they had been overzealous. They had no legal right to search us or our car without a warrant. It was hard to say how this might end because things do not always proceed in a legal manner.
If the Chicago police followed a legal course of action, there would be no charges. They decided to teach us a lesson. During race riots, the cells would be segregated. We were placed in an all-black cell filled past capacity and was almost standing room only.

Later, I was taken to a lineup with a few other prisoners. It soon becomes obvious they were looking for a rapist. To my horror, I heard a woman say, "That's him!" When I opened my mouth, a cop asked me if I would like to have my head rammed through a nearby locker. Many people have been sent to prison for things they did not do. It was becoming all too clear to me how that could happen. When an older cop was near me, I asked him what time the rape occurred. When he answered, I was astonished. Earlier in the day I had been lost and stopped at a police station to ask directions. My visit to that station had coincided precisely with the time of the rape. I'm normally poor at remembering names, but this desk Sergeant’s name I remembered easily. His name was O'Malley. It was a perfect stereotype name for a cop. Had it been anything different I doubt very much that I would have ever remembered it. O'Malley was my alibi. The problem was to prove it.

By the time I had a lawyer who might locate O'Malley, he would have long ago forgotten the brief incident. The Chicago police department had already threatened my life by placing me in a black cell during a race riot. Another cop had offered to “Ram my head through a locker.” The odds of finding anyone who cared enough to help at that police station was slim. There had to be someone working there that would listen to me. I tried again. I told an officer I had been at another precinct at the time of the rape. He asked and I told him the cop I spoke with was named O'Malley. The police were overworked during the riot, so I could not help but wonder, how much time he would commit to establishing my alibi. It was my problem, not his. To my utter amazement, he returned and said my story checked out. That put an end to the whole rape ordeal. The intense hatred I was developing for everybody and everything took a setback because of that cop.
My friend borrowed money from his girlfriend for our bail. Soon afterwards, a lawyer took us to a private room. Three men entered and one called the court to order. The lawyer said there had been an Illegal Search and Seizure. The judge said evidence suppressed, charges dismissed and got up and left.

***

Upon my return from Rockford, my mother offered me a place to stay, and help with childcare. I had been out of work since breaking up with my wife and now had very little money. Unable to afford a train or bus, I called home and asked my mom to send The Weasel.

My mom had been dating Roy, a fifty year old, known as The Weasel. He worked for A.C. Spark Plug in the daytime and his nights were spent drinking and gambling. He was a skin and bones alcoholic that weighed in around 95 pounds. The brain-numbing amounts of alcohol he consumed was responsible for his talking like a three hundred pound sumo wrestler. An association with the weasel was like being a member of the laugh a week club. He spent a large part of his life at a private gambling club.

One night he left with another member named Analyzer. That night Analyzer was drunk and fell down a flight of stairs. Word spread that he was pushed. For weeks afterwards if anybody said something The Weasel didn't like, he would yell, "Shut up, or I'll throw you down the stairs like I did to Analyzer". Another time The Weasel showed up at my place on his new 50 CC moped. It had pedals and was ridden like a bicycle to start the engine. He was so small the helmet appeared to rest on his shoulders and his jacket was a cape flapping in the wind. He looked like a mini superhero. The sight of him was enough to send a sane person into hysterics.

The Weasel was drunk in Chicago one night and hugging the toilet when he accidentally flushed half his dentures. Realizing through his drunken stupor what he had done, he reasoned that his insurance company would replace them. Believing it would be better to replace
the whole set, he dropped the other half into the watery grave and flushed again. A short time later he learned his insurance policy did not cover dentures.

Roy was always performing bar tricks. He would flip a cigarette in the air and catch it with his mouth or try to make a quarter disappear up his sleeve. He used to set a shot of gin on fire and drink it while it was burning. He set his face on fire more than once doing that trick. Everything he did was preceded with, “Betcha a drink.”

A train ran over Roy’s foot and caused him to lose all of his toes plus a little of his foot. During visits to various bars, Roy would get drunk and in a loud voice say, “I bet you that I am the only man in the house with a foot and a half. I’ll lay it right here on the bar to prove it. Wanna bet a drink?”

You never knew what was going to set him off. He was always loud and striving to be the center of attention when he was drinking. If he hadn’t had enough to drink yet, he would be silently off in some corner. It was one of those silent off in the corner afternoons when I came into the living room for a cigarette. The TV was on. As I sat there, a commercial played for "Smucker's Jams". As it ended, I was struck with the humor of the name.

"What an odd name,” I said. “Whoever heard of anyone named Smucker?”

You would have thought someone had poked him with a cattle prod. He suddenly leaped out of his chair and yelled, "What are you talking about? I used to go with Emma Smucker.”

He was angry and I should not have laughed as hard as I did. Roy could be generous at times and he was kind enough to make the long drive to pick up my son, Kenny, and myself. He caught a few hours’ sleep and we left for Flint. Arriving back in Flint made my mom happy. She had not seen my son, Kenny, for a while. I quickly found a job at a gas station working the graveyard shift so I could watch Kenny during the day.
One night an old thunderbird pulled in with three guys in it. They shut the car off and one of them indicated it was a mistake. It would not start again. They waited for another customer to show up and asked for a push. They were back in three minutes and asked for a fill up. When I was done, they pulled a gun on me. It was not my money or gas and I saw no reason to try and be a hero. I gave them all the cash and was told to wait in the back room. When they left, I reported the robbery.

The law showed up and did all their cop stuff. After asking questions about the robbery, it seemed that every conversation kept coming back to me. I took one of them out in the driveway and picked up a piece of taillight that was laying there. “Here, this came off their car.” Soon I heard a cop from his patrol car say he and his partner had seen an old thunderbird with some black guys in it. He said they were wondering what those guys were doing in the area at that time of the night. Genesee County was one of the most racially segregated county in America at that time. Finally, the detective I had been talking to asked me if I would go to Lansing, Michigan, about fifty miles away, to take a polygraph. I started thinking about the ten cartons of cigarettes I had stolen and some other things. Then I found out he wanted me to go there on my own. I said I’d let them know. The gas station job was easy but staying up all night working and trying to raise a son during the day was taking a toll on me. I wasn’t disappointed when I was let go after the robbery.
CHAPTER 3

Almost Went Down the Drain

One day I ran into a guy I knew who had something to show me. He had what looked like a large snowball made of dried plants. He suggested we smoke some. I was soon smoking that stuff all the time. It helped me abandon the few morals I had left and made it easier to commit crimes.

Soon after Pame left with our friend, his mother joined them. Within a year, Pame left that mother and son team and returned to Flint. I made a heartbreaking decision to give her our son. My life was spiraling out of control and I wanted what was best for him.

By now I was living on a daily diet of weed and alcohol. More opportunities to get into trouble were presenting themselves daily. The police parked across the street from our house most of the time. Visitors were warned to expect to be stopped or followed when they left.

The police were not watching my house the night a guy called Aardvark left so polluted that he sideswiped cars on both sides of the street. He left a trail of debris as he drove away. He never could drive. The last time I got in a car with him was also a disaster. We were on a residential street in a ghetto and he flipped the car upside down. To this day I do not know how he flipped that car because there was nothing around us. We were on the road with gas pouring in from somewhere and my eyes were full of glass. I climbed out and knocked on the door of a house seeking help. Strangers took me in and stuck
my head under the kitchen faucet to wash away the glass before letting me out their back door.

A friend was moving and I delivered a few boxes of stuff to the new apartment and met a girl in the hallway. Melanie was standing beside her belongings and said she had been kicked out. She said she had no plans, so I took her home with me. Melanie was attractive and worked in a bar downtown as a stripper.

She and I were out looking for something to occupy our time one night. We were in the car leaving a house when some bikers rode up. Melanie said, “Wait, I think I know those guys”. She recognized the vice president of a local club and I told her to invite them to party at my place. They were unaccustomed to invitations like that but accepted and followed us home. We were like minded people and soon had some strong friendships.

Before long, I tried my hand at pimping and selling stolen things. Selling drugs became an almost daily thing. My feelings and emotions were so numb from drugs that it didn't matter what I did, as long as I profited by it.

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It was toward the end of the 1960's and my hair was starting to get long. By now I was wearing an earring, which was not common at the time. A girl pierced my nose with a carpet needle and I started wearing a ring in it. Gypsy Jack was the only other person I ever heard of to have pierced his nose. It was totally unheard of and shocking to most people at that time. I went into a store to buy beer and the owner took one look and called the police. The beer was my only interest. I had no intentions of causing problems. It was something the world was not ready to deal with yet. I wanted to go back and burn the place down but was too messed up to remember what I planned to do.

I carried a crowbar and a meat cleaver for a weapon but soon found a gun to be more practical. By now I was using all kinds of drugs including LSD, amphetamines, psilocybin, marijuana, hashish
and anything else I could get my hands on. I rode around with my friends from the motorcycle club and wore the same dirty clothes for months. I was stunned years later, when I looked at one of my mugshots and saw how dirty my clothes were.

That summer we made a club run to a gravel pit. It was out of the way and a good place for swimming. Some people who showed up on the second day had found T-bone, who was my old lady at the time. She was with another chick and they brought them both to the campsite. I was not too happy about that because I was prospecting for the club and not sure how far someone might push me if they wanted her. The girl that came with her was gang raped. That was a fairly common occurrence in the clubs.

Some citizens (non-club members) cut a bike off on the road and got their car shot up. There were a couple of beatings and a robbery. Some citizens thought they could come out and make friends with the bikers. They drove into the camp slowly and when approached, pointed to a stack of pizzas in the back of their pickup truck. Everybody ate pizza until they rolled down the window and a biker grabbed a carton of cigarettes from their vehicle. The citizens panicked and sped off narrowly escaping the rock-throwing mob.

The police arrested Gypsy Jack on an old traffic warrant. I drove his hearse into town and brought him back to the party. When I returned, a guy named Kong, who could be extremely violent, decided to see how I might act under a little pressure. He walked up to me and said "Make me laugh or I'm going to lunch you" (punch you).

Earlier in life, I wanted to work as a comedian and tried a couple of times at some bars. I had memorized many of Redd Foxx's routines and could do them perfectly. My friends enjoyed them when they were recited at parties. When Kong said "Make me laugh or I'm going to lunch you", I didn't hesitate for a second. There was a tree stump nearby that I climbed on. With a loud voice, I launched into one of my routines as if there were 2,000 people in my audience. He did his best to keep a straight face, but I soon got to him.
Other than my mother, most others were not as fortunate in their dealings with him. He and I were visiting at my house when he got up to use the toilet. On his return to where I was, he encountered my mother. He must have made some kind of comment to her because she thought it was time to set the record straight. Without hesitation, she told him, “I’m not afraid of you”. Here was a guy who seems to thrive on terrorizing people. Many would go to considerable lengths to stay out of his way. I think it jolted him for someone’s mom to speak to him like that. He returned to me grinning ear to ear and said, “Your mom is somethin’ else”.

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There was a guy named Twisted Timmy whose father was in local politics. He bought Timmy a trike (a three-wheeled motorcycle) and told him to stay out of sight because of his career. He was new around the bike clubs and wanted to join. Timmy went on probation for the club and was on the gravel pit run. He wanted a different bike and made a deal with someone to sell them the bike for a giveaway price. He was then going to claim it was stolen and collect the insurance money. Kong heard him talking about it and was furious that he had not offered it to anyone in the club first. He started beating Timmy while dragging him into the water. Kong nearly drowned him before letting him flee.

One night I had three visitors who were bikers from a larger well-known club. We partied a while and they said they wanted my old lady. I said, “No,” and they offered a mild threat. When I still didn't back down, they let it go. I happened to mention it to Kong one day and he went to see them. I think he had been prospecting for them. He said there were few places where he was welcome and my place was one of them. He made it plain that no one was going to ruin that for him and if necessary he would keep them out of the city.

It was amazing that with all the trouble I had gotten into, and the friends I kept, that my record was almost clean. I had one "unlawful
use of weapons” arrest without a conviction and one "minor in possession" from a while back.

The second charge came one day when I was driving around with a friend named Jesse Witt. We each had a beer in our hand when we were pulled over by the police. I didn’t think much of it, because the car was clean and there were no warrants for either of us.

Jesse, however, had an intense hatred of the law. He had served a few years in Ionia, a maximum correctional facility in Michigan, and swore he was not going back. Jesse was normally quiet and laid back, but could be fearless at times. When a club from Detroit came to my place to visit, (I think they wanted to know more about us) Jesse went back with them alone to party. I think they had left before I even knew what was going on. A few days later he showed up and said they had given him an impressive tour. It was a crazy thing to do but Jesse wasn't good at backing down.

The police would have let us go with our can of beer, but normally quiet and laid back Jesse could not keep his hatred inside, so I ended up with a "Minor in Possession" on my nearly clean record. Jesse was killed a couple years later in a gunfight with the police.

I moved into a three-story house on Louisa Street in a rough part of town. Across the street was an old movie theater that had been converted into a pool hall, record store and some other stuff. Garbage Breath and his old lady moved in with me.

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This was a time in my life totally given to drugs and I was being destroyed by them. My house had a third floor that was one big room and I fixed it up to hold my drug parties. It took weeks to turn it into a place people would never forget. Optical illusions and things to confound the mind at the best of times were everywhere. People not on drugs sometimes left the room in a hurry because of all the optical illusions confusing their mind. There was an unending parade of people at the door hoping to gain access to the trip room as it had
gained quite a reputation. Few would think of visiting without bringing drugs.

There were visits by a number of different bike clubs and also a few musicians. A local group known as Question Mark and The Mysterians had a hit record called “96 Tears.” Somebody brought their lead singer for a visit. Another night a group of guys showed up wearing spoons for bracelets. They said their lead singer, Alice Cooper, was not with them that night, but we were invited to visit them at a house they had rented. We went to visit their house/zoo and found this band had some uncommon pets. The monkey was without a doubt the most entertaining.

While standing in front of my house early one morning, a garbage truck drove around the corner and stopped. A rather big guy jumped off the back of the truck to pick up the garbage. Seeing me standing there talking with someone, he said, “Hello”. I greeted him as he looked at the house and asked me if I knew Zip. I said, “Well, I guess so. I’m Zip”.

He had recently been released from prison and when I heard his name, I knew of him. He said he had heard of the trip room and wanted to know if he could see it. I invited them in and we became good friends. Thinking about it later, that must have looked a little weird to my neighbors. I mean after all, do you know anybody who ever had the men driving the garbage truck stop in for a visit?

For sheer weirdness, nobody could beat Ronnie. A button came off his clothes when he was a young child and he put it in his mouth to play with it. The thread was still attached to the button when he unintentionally swallowed it. Ronnie pulled the thread that was still in his mouth and recovered the button. Thinking this was fun, it became his new game. After some time, he discovered that he was able to bring the button back into his mouth without the thread. Apparently, he continued doing this throughout his life.
By the time I met him he had a few tricks that baffled people. He had a small ball about the size of a quarter that he carried around with him. He would swallow the ball without anyone knowing it. He would then invite someone to verify his mouth was empty. That being done, he would stand erect and tilt his head back with his mouth open. In moments, the ball would eject from his mouth into the air, and bounce on the floor, before he caught it and astounded his audience.

Even more baffling was when he would place two dimes on either side of a nickel and swallow them. For some reason, they stayed together well even after he had swallowed them. He would then ask someone to verify his mouth was empty before he put the quarter on his tongue and closed his mouth. In a few moments, he would open his mouth again and give them change for the quarter. What he was doing was so simple that no one ever figured it out. They kept wondering how he tricked them.

One of the most dramatic things he did was to swallow a mouthful of cigarette lighter fluid. He then held a lit cigarette lighter by his mouth and brought up the fluid. The flame would shoot a few feet across the room and was enough to get anyone’s attention. I’ve met some weird people, but Ronnie was one of a kind.

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One day, I was introduced to a young, black girl named Evelyn. It wasn’t long before we had a son and named him Nathan. Her family took to me and her mom and I become the best of friends Interracial couples were uncommon at that time and I loved the problems it caused everywhere we went. Evelyn was fearless and would often answer someone before I could. I'll never forget the time we were walking through the mall when two young, black guys saw us. "Will you just look at that?" one of them said. (That’s not exactly what he said, I had to censor.) Before I was even sure who said it, Evelyn had leaped in front of them and was about four inches from their faces saying, "Yeah? Well, what do you want to do about it, boy?" They could see by the look on her face that this was more trouble than they
wanted. They both backed up and went around her without another word.

The hangout I preferred when fighting boredom was the pool hall where I met Samson, who ran the place. Besides the pool tables, there was also some pinball games and a coke machine. Samson would let us cheat the machines. There was a place under the pool tables where you could insert a stick, and it would drop all the balls for a free game. The Weasel brought a strong magnet home from the factory and gave it to me when he tired of it. I went straight to the pool hall and said, “Samson, wait till you see what I got. We used the magnet to control the steel ball in the pinball machine and racked up free games.

Messing with people’s heads was something I thoroughly enjoyed. Fishing minnows are easily acquired and can be kept in a small aquarium. When I went to visit friends and share drugs, I took a small glass bottle with a minnow in it. As soon as everybody was zoned out, I would slip away and put the minnow in the toilet. It would not be long before someone would leave for the toilet and return with a dumb look on their face. That look of disbelief was enough to crack up anyone who knew what had just happened.

As much as I liked having fun, it was also a time when I would hurt anyone that got in my way, even my own family. In fact, I had grown so cold in my heart and so godless that it would have been easy to take someone's life. My next door neighbor, Dixon had come to my porch and was complaining to Evelyn about something she said. Evelyn was not well known for her apologies and made some suggestions that Dixon didn't care for. He grabbed her by the throat and began choking her. Another girl started screaming, “Zip, Zip! Dixon is trying to kill Evelyn!”

I flew through the front door and leaped on his back with a death grip on his neck. He weakened and released his grip on her. I loved Evelyn and the thought of someone harming her filled me with blinding rage. I would have killed him before I knew what I had done.
In that moment, I had completely lost all rationality. Had I become the man I had wanted to kill when I was ten?

There was a guy there from another club named Bear, who might be described as a large person. When it became evident that I was in a fit of blind rage, he came running up from the yard and pulled me off him. In those few moments, my whole life could have gone down the drain. Killing a person would have brought some serious legal repercussions. I knew I had some anger issues, but that incident scared me.
CHAPTER 4

You Can’t Catch Me

On March 16, 1968, I was sharing drugs with friends from the club when I arose to answer a loud knock at the door. The house was surrounded and my porch filled with cops. I gave a warning and delayed opening the door as long as I could before they might try kicking it in. When I opened it, a cop informed me he had a warrant for Zip and asked if that was me. Although they didn't know my proper name, I was too well known as Zip to lie about it. These cops and their warrant were nothing to be too concerned about. “Yea, I’m Zip.” “We have a warrant for you and another that says we can look around in here.” After a detailed search of my place turned up nothing useful, they sent everybody away and took me downtown. When I found out what they had on me, I thought it was a joke. That was a failure on my part to recognize how determined the State of Michigan had become in their efforts to remove me from society.

This took place in the latter part of the 1960’s when the whole world seemed to be smoking marijuana. In Ann Arbor, a collage town fifty miles south of Flint, they were writing tickets for possession of small amounts. The police informed me that I had sold a teaspoon of marijuana to their guy, and he would testify against me. Apparently, I had made a second sale that they knew about. Selling a teaspoon of marijuana was not a charge to be taken seriously and I figured it was just more harassment. It seemed like such a waste of their time considering all the things I was mixed up in.
After my arrest, Evelyn talked to her father, Andrew, about posting my ridiculously high bond. Her family had little income and lived in an impoverished neighborhood. Andrew agreed and went downtown to fetch me. He put up his house to the bondsman as he didn’t have that kind of money. He then went to the country jail to have me released. Apparently, there was some confusion with the guards when he arrived.

“You want who? Are you sure that’s the one you want? Wait a minute. Let’s get him out here so you can see if that’s the right one.”

The guard was more than a little taken back when Andrew said, “Yes, that’s the one I want”. It must have been uncommon to see a sixty-some year old black man putting up his house to bail out a young, white biker. Arrangements were made for Andrew to be reimbursed before I absconded.

It was a year until my trial date on that teaspoon came due. By staying high all the time, I wasn’t worried about a trial that far in the future. My drug-induced serenity was shattered when my lawyer said they were charging me with something extremely unusual. The Governor of the State of Michigan had declared war on the bike gangs and this may have had something to do with what was about to take place.

Law enforcement agencies were successful in taking down John Sinclair, by viewing marijuana as a narcotic. In July 1969, Sinclair was sentenced to 9½ to 10 years in prison for possession of two marijuana cigarettes. Two and a half years of legal and political battles culminated at Chrysler Arena in Ann Arbor on December 10, 1971, when 15,000 people attended the Free John Now Rally headlined by John Lennon and Yoko Ono. Three days later, the Michigan Supreme Court, on its own motion, ordered him released and later overturned his conviction, upholding the contention that Michigan's marijuana statutes were unconstitutional and void.
I was charged with "Sale of an illegal narcotic”. John’s possession charge got him ten years. My charge of “sales” carried twenty years to life if convicted. If I found a way to beat the first charge, they were going to prosecute me on the second one. I was looking at as much as two life sentences. This law was intended for opium, heroin, or cocaine, etc. but not marijuana as it is not a narcotic. The influence of too many drugs did not allow me to fully appreciate what the state of Michigan was attempting to do.

One night I was out walking a few blocks from my house dressed in the standard cutoff denim jacket that all the bike clubs wore back then. Having not yet prepared for my court date, I was dirty and badly in need of a haircut, by society’s standards. The moment I stepped in front of a restaurant, a car door opened. The judge for my case and I were staring into each other’s faces. Both of us paused for what seemed like an eternity. I should have seen the outcome of my case on his face right then, but like I said, “Too many drugs”.

My trial date drew near and the police had begun harassing me with “traffic violations.” They wanted the opportunity for more charges before the trial. One time I came out of my driveway and had reached the corner when a patrol car pulled up behind me. After some Mickey Mouse stuff, he went back to his car. Just then a few other patrol cars came from every direction at the same time. They wanted to be sure I understood the threat. They were hoping for a reason to pounce on me.

On the first day of the trial, I was still convinced that I was invincible. As the proceedings began and I heard the evidence presented against me, my invincibility began to dissipate. The judge asked me if I understood the seriousness of the charges. He said I was facing twenty years to life if convicted. He also made note of the second charge pending. That was when I began to see the case was going to be of a more serious nature than anticipated. Watching the jury selection take place was discomforting.
Obviously, they wanted me off their streets. I began formulating my own plan to accomplish this without their aid. As the day wore on, the drugs wore off. It seemed like many hours later the judge said, "It's getting late in the day and I'm going to adjourn court till 9 A.M. tomorrow morning." He called me to the bench and said I was still on bond and therefore free to go until court resumed the following day. Unlike John Sinclair, I had no plans to sit in prison and wait for laws to change.

Plans to leave town became my immediate priority. I stopped across the street at the pool hall to bid farewell to a friend. When I told Samson I was going, he emptied the pool tables and pinball machines and gave me all the cash he could scrape up. He hugged my neck and told me to be careful, knowing it was unlikely we would meet again.

It was late evening when Gypsy Jack pulled up in his hearse. Jack was a living legend among bikers. As I said before, he wore a ring in his nose before I did. He had been featured on a T.V. show called "Real People". The first time I went to Jack’s place was before he had the house and was in an apartment on the east side of Flint. The entrance was a narrow hallway that went into the living room. In fact, it was the only room unless you counted the four by eight foot space he called a kitchen. It looked like a western museum. Every inch of wall space seemed to be covered with paraphernalia. He had signs advertising everything related to the old west. There were lamps made of guns, a bear skin rug on the floor, animal furs nailed on the walls and a saddle on the footstool. Jack had the saddle on his bike, but it made his back hurt. A picture of him would have looked appropriate on the wanted poster in any cowboy movie. Jack had a pinch of snuff in his mouth one day when I ran into him at the Salvation Army.

We were standing there among the used shoes talking when he took a cowboy boot and spat into it before replacing it on the rack. He could be unpredictable at times. I told Jack I was leaving and he asked me if I wanted to climb into the back of his hearse with the woman he
had with him. It was not his wife, Peggy. I declined and we said our goodbyes.

In their determination to remove me from society, the State of Michigan continued with the jury selection and tried me without my presence. The trial took place and the jury found me guilty. On Wednesday, December 2, 1970, the Honorable Anthony J. Mansour, Circuit Judge at Flint, Michigan, pronounced judgment.

(File # 22889) Judgment of Sentence, part 6. The sentence of the court is as follows: “That the Defendant be given over to the jurisdiction of the Michigan Corrections Commission for a period of not less than twenty-five, nor more than forty years.” The judge subsequently issued a Federal Warrant for "Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution."

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For the next ten years, I became a fugitive, with the police in hot pursuit. I encountered a number of narrow escapes.

My decision to hide in Canada was based on the fact that it had become an American draft dodger’s haven. The Canadians would assume I was another draft dodger hiding from the Vietnam conflict. All I took was a sleeping bag and what little cash I could find on such short notice. About midnight, I was saying goodbyes and about ready to leave when some neighborhood police showed up. They were young guys and new on that beat. They had heard about the trip room and asked if I would show it to them. They may have been told to keep an eye on me that night. We visited for a while and after they left, I did likewise.

Evelyn came along for the ride when a friend drove me into Canada via the Detroit, Windsor border. We thought more traffic at the Windsor border would make it easier to enter Canada than the Sarnia crossing. To my dismay, I found Windsor much too small for a hiding place. We continued on to Chatham, the next city, and it proved to be almost as small. They needed to hurry home before I was discovered.
missing. A small park in Chatham would have to do. I bid Evelyn goodbye knowing I may never see her or our son again.

It was late fall and the temperature was starting to drop at night. Having found a place for my sleeping bag, I climbed inside to wait for dawn.

The next thing I knew, somebody was trying to awaken me. Opening my eyes nearly caused heart failure. I was looking into the faces of two cops. It looked like my role as a fugitive was not off to an impressive beginning. I wondered how many years they would they add to my sentence for the six hours of freedom I had just gained, when the policeman said, "You cannot sleep here."

"Yes sir, no problem, I was just getting up." The policeman then added, "You can come with us and sleep in an empty cell". I thought for a moment and realized it was an invitation. As unaccustomed as I was to acts of kindness by most members of various law enforcement agencies, I was nevertheless compelled to decline.

"Well if you change your mind, it’s warm and you could have something to eat."

I thanked the officers profusely and continued to decline. As they walked away, I climbed on a park bench.

It did seem a little odd being up that time of the morning and how was I going to get through the day with no drugs? While I contemplated my dismal future, two young boys approached and greeted me. Having no previous commitments, I allowed them to engage me in conversation. They may have been about fifteen years of age and were not afraid to ask what was on their mind.

"Yes, I guess I am a homeless person."

The young man responded. "You can come home with me and stay at our house. M folks won't care".
“Well, they might not like you bringing home a stranger like that”.

"Oh they won't mind, they are nice people", the boy remarked. A cursory glance at my social calendar verified my suspicions; I was, in fact, free for the rest of that day.

“O.K.”, I said, “Let's go meet them”.

The kid’s mom was a nice lady. She fed us and said the new house guest would probably be acceptable with dad when he came home from work. The drug haze I was in kept me from considering the problems I might cause by being there. Dad seemed hesitant to ask me to leave and eventually said it’d be alright to spend the night. Later that evening when the dad and I talked, he informed me of a relative who might be able to help me.

The next afternoon, I met an uncle who invited me to his home with an offer of work. He wanted to help them remove me from their house in a pleasant manner. I accepted his offer to pay me for cutting his lawn and have food afterwards. Later, he invited me to see his gun collection which contained many unusual pieces. He asked me to never reveal his location and gun collection to any of my friends, but I already knew that was not going to happen. The man was a retired cop and offered me his advice. At that point, he probably knew more about being a fugitive then I did, so I listened. He said I would be wise to proceed to Toronto where it would be much easier to hide. He said I could “disappear in a city that size”. He wanted to help me, and to my amazement, offered to buy me a ticket to Toronto. That surprised me and I hardly knew what to say. Later that day, he drove me to the bus station, where we met the boys and their family who had come to say goodbye. I could not thank them enough for their kindness. The rest of the world, other than the part I had been living in, was different than I remembered.

The bus trip was spent talking to some hippies who told me how to find shelter immediately. The Y.M.C.A. offered three days lodging
when they had room. We arrived at the bus station and a short walk put me on Yonge Street and into the heart of the city. The Y.M.C.A. was located. The clerk said, “You can sleep here for twenty-five cents, or you can pay fifty cents and also have breakfast in the morning”. I decided to splurge. The next morning when I saw breakfast, I wished I'd not been so free with my money. This three-day offer made it necessary to find more permanent lodging as soon as possible.

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My first day’s search was unfruitful. Upon returning to the Y.M.C.A., I prepared mentally for another night’s worth of attempted sleep. We were in one large room with rows of cots, side by side. The place was filled with the kind of people who could afford to pay twenty-five cents a night for a place to sleep. A place on Spadina Avenue looked hopeful till the caretaker opened the door and turned on the lights. Canadian cockroaches scurried in every direction.

Thankfully I found a sleeping room off Queen Street East by the race tracks the next day. It cost twelve dollars a week without cockroaches and may have been smaller than my intended prison cell. There was a hotplate and a small refrigerator. A small nearby supermarket furnished me with lots of discounted spoiling fruits and vegetables. Day old bread, rice and anything that was inexpensive was acceptable to me. My goal was to survive at that time. There were no weapons in my room because attempting to bring anything of that type across the border would have been a foolish decision. The sleeping bag was already a risk for someone claiming to be a tourist.

Finding employment without identification was a challenge. One guy paid me two dollars a day and a sandwich to help him deliver milk. A French guy with a second hand store paid me a dollar an hour to help him on his truck. He let me have all the used clothing and books I wanted. In truth, I needed that time to help get my mind clear, but it was not to last for long.
Voices were heard in the hallway, so I cracked my door open to hear if it presented any threat to me. From my second floor room, I could see that a policeman had entered the building and was speaking to my landlord. They were looking for someone. There was a small possibility that they had the building surrounded. If that was the case, then being on the second floor would not make it easy to slip away unnoticed.

Becoming trapped and ending up in prison was not going to happen if I could help it. If the building was surrounded, my best, and perhaps only opportunity for escape, was to hide in someone else's room. That’s what I did; however, I took a large kitchen knife with me. Ending my own life was a far better choice, in my mind, than rotting in a prison cell. My friend, Jesse, had been to prison and he chose to die in a gunfight rather than return to a cell. Many animals have chewed off their own foot to escape a trap. Was I any different than one of those animals who wanted their freedom that badly? No one was going to put me in a cage again if I could stop them. I wanted to live but was ready to die before they could take me. Later I learned there were two police officers, at the most, and they did not search the building. Eventually, I was able to escape and sought a way to leave the city.

Phone calls to family or friends were a risk I wasn’t taking. My mother devised a way to communicate through her place of employment. She worked at Hurley Hospital and I would call her supervisor person to person. Her supervisor paged her to his private office so she could talk to me. My mother and I put a plan together.
CHAPTER 5

Naked in the Bush

Kimberly, a woman in Flint, owned a small boutique. Her claim to fame was that the “Grand Funk Railroad” had taken the photo used on the cover of their first album at her store. It had a picture of a clock that ran backward on it. Kimberly had purchased a farm in the Madawaska Valley near Algonquin Provincial Park with two other people. My mother and Kimberly communicated through a mutual friend and agreed that the farm would be a good place for me. With these plans in place, some friends from Michigan were able to slip into Canada with the sole purpose of transporting me safely to the farmhouse. Of all the people I knew, mom was the one I could trust.

My rescue squad arrived and we headed north into more snow than I’ve ever seen. The farther north we went, the deeper the snow became. We found Barry’s Bay and started down a plowed, but unpaved road, with high snow banks on both sides. It became more difficult by the mile to believe there were people actually living in that area. The driveway we found was more like another road. It had been plowed just enough to get a couple cars off the main road. The remainder of the driveway was covered with snow. We parked and started down the driveway. None of us were able to walk well with city shoes. We helped each other along till we came to a house that looked like it was in a hole. The snow was so deep that the path to the front door was on a long downward sloop. Thomas, one of the three owners of the farm, answered the door. Kimberly had no way to inform Thomas of her plans to hide me on the farm. There were no
telephones, electricity, indoor plumbing, or running water. Needless to say, we had a few awkward moments before Thomas realized he had no choice but to go along with the plan.

My friends left and Thomas and I came to terms quickly. He may not have been thrilled about my being there, but he seemed equally indifferent about the idea of crossing me. A day or so later, Thomas inquired further into my bike club’s affiliations back in our hometown of Flint. We established tolerable living conditions by staying out of each other’s way and cooperating on matters of mutual interest. We kept a fire going in the kitchen and read frequently. There were one hundred pound bags of rice, beans, raw sugar, etc. Hippies trying to get back to nature I guess. Eating rice and reading was fine with me as long as there were no bars on the doors and windows. The temperatures could reach twenty below zero for two weeks at a time. On a warmer day, Thomas and I would cut standing dead wood to burn.

To my surprise, I met neighbors who had chosen to live in that area of their own free will. A married couple named Daniel and Alice were Americans who both had Ph.D.’s in English. They ended up living there because Daniel had been friends with Alan Ginsberg, and that friendship had cost him his job.

Alan Ginsberg led the be-ins in Berkeley that was the precursors of the anti-war demonstrations. He was considered by some to be the father of the hippie movement. He embraced the counterculture including drugs, homosexuality, anti-war activism, and eastern religions. In a memorandum from Hoover to the Secret Service in 1965, Ginsberg was cited as an "Internal Security--Cuba" case, and a potential threat to the president of the United States. On the document, stamped Secret, Ginsberg was listed as "potentially dangerous" and a "subversive," with "evidence of emotional instability (including unstable residence and employment record) or irrational or suicidal behavior," as having made "expressions of strong or violent anti U.S. sentiment," and as having "a propensity for violence and antipathy
toward good order and government." In view of all this, it is easy to understand why the government might investigate or bring pressure to bear upon his friends and associates. Daniel was more or less run out of his job teaching, causing him enough resentment to also leave the country.

Warmer weather appeared and I met another neighbor. Stanley was in his sixties and lived alone with his horse. Wal-Mart’s restrooms on average were twice the size of his house. His vocabulary consisted of slightly over one hundred words, most of which he seldom used. He basically stuck to his fourteen favorite cusses and swear words, but on the rare occasion, it was possible to have a shallow conversation with him. The most memorable was when he told of watching his father kill his brother. Years earlier Stanley’s family had immigrated to Canada from Poland. The whole family worked on the farm together until Stanley’s father lost his temper and stabbed his brother with a pitchfork. When the Mounties came to investigate, they were told by Stanley's father that he had an accident. Since Stanley's father was the only one who could speak some English, the matter was settled. It was an accident.

It was amazing to see what was buried beneath the snow as it retreated. Buildings popped out and there was a large sheet of yellow metal that appeared on the ground as the snow continued to melt. That one turned out to be the roof of a full-size school bus. Winter was serious business in this part of the world and I was glad to see it ending.

With little else to do when spring arrived, I began to explore my new neighborhood. Most of the land was covered in thick forest that locals referred to as the bush. There was a river with a dam nearby. A man came to adjust the water flow of the dam and we spoke for a while. He showed me how to open the locked gates that keep people from crossing the dam. This gave me access to the other side where I could have complete privacy. That place held such an attraction for me that I found myself drawn to it often. The dense forest made me feel
hidden from the world. The sound of water going over the dam contributed to the serenity of my surroundings. Genuine peace had eluded me my entire life and this place brought me closer than I had been in a long time.

Daniel owned a truck that they drove to Barry's Bay twice a month to check their post office box and pick up supplies. Our friendship grew and they had started asking me if I wanted to tag along. After all these years, the cowboy movies now made sense to me. There was always a scene where someone said, "I'm a going into town. Any of ya'll wanna ride along"? I never understood why the other cowboy got all excited and said, "Why sure, I'll tag along". I am embarrassed to admit that at that time, even a trip into Barry's Bay seemed filled with excitement.

It was during one of these exciting visits to Barry's Bay that Daniel allowed me to accompany him to a dumpster he had discovered behind the local grocery store. While on one hand, I was honored he shared such a well-concealed secret with me, yet, how could you not help but think armed robbery had more dignity. Unaccustomed as I was to such self-degradation, the prospects of undiscovered treasure held an allure I could not resist.

Diving into the dumpster, soon became one of those, "What the heck am I doing?" moments. It was hard enough to believe I was climbing around in a metal box full of garbage, but what about my accomplice. Here was a highly intelligent man with a Ph.D. in English, filled with all the anticipation of a child at Christmas. To everybody's delight, we found a couple of large blocks of cheese that had some mold on them. Cheese is mostly molded anyway, isn’t it? They were still sealed in the packages with the prices on them. The best treasure was what I found. When you purchase meat in the supermarket, it is wrapped in transparent cellophane. This cellophane comes in huge rolls approximately two feet wide and miles long. The supermarket had thrown out two rolls of it. We stashed our goodies in the truck and
headed home, content that somewhere in our future there would be several meals containing cheese.

When the opportunity arose, I picked up my cellophane and headed for the far side of the dam. After a lengthy search, I found four young trees that formed a ten feet square. Most of them had multiple trunks. I wrapped the cellophane around two trunks repeatedly to a height of six feet to make a transparent wall about ten feet long. I made three walls and used blankets for the fourth which doubled as a door. The weather was now warm enough to make this my new home.

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Daniel and Alice were friends with a couple named Gary and Fay that lived several miles down the same road. They had relocated from Louisiana. Fay invited her younger sisters and two of their friends to visit for the summer. The whole bunch got together for a meal and I was invited along with Daniel and Alice. The three girls were fascinated when I told them where I was living and they wanted to visit. The camp was secluded and I saw no need for clothes. The girls wanted to swim and soon were also naked. Contrary to their sister’s desires, all three girls decided to spend the summer with me. One girl named Rita had a boyfriend, who also came along.

Rita and I had gone for a walk away from the campfire and eventually heard her boyfriend searching for her. We decided that it would be best for me to take a longer walk so she could end that relationship in an amicable manner. If she was the one to send him home, it was unlikely there would be any undesirable repercussions. The farmhouse seemed to be the best place to spend the rest of the night. Unfortunately, it was one of those extremely dark nights with no moonlight that made walking difficult. Stanley had recently killed a bear and knowing that bears and many other animals lived in the bush was not a comforting thought as I started my journey. Being naked and without shoes added to my situation. My footsteps were so quiet I could have walked into a bear before I knew it was there. It felt like I was not moving when I walked because the darkness was so complete.
There was an uncomfortable and eerie stillness in the forest that night. Locating the farmhouse was a real challenge, but eventually, I attained my goal.

Thomas returned to Michigan and Kimberly arrived with some friends to spend a few weeks. She had invited Kevin, a guy who liked her, to visit while he got his feet back on the ground. He had spent some time in a mental institution and upon his release headed for the farmhouse where he thought he might find a serene setting. Kevin arrived at the farmhouse that day and was beginning to feel comfortable when I knocked on the door about midnight. Kimberly was wrapped up in a blanket on the sofa and called for me to come in. I explained that things might be awkward at the camp, so I returned to the farmhouse for the night. Kimberly introduced me to Kevin before I climbed under the blanket with her. My nude arrival at midnight to visit his intended had caused him to rule out any possibility of a meaningful friendship. He left the area before we had an opportunity to become acquainted. Rita’s former boyfriend also decided to leave. The girls and I spent our days swimming, fishing, and sun tanning. Every day or two the girls would go home for a visit and return with food. Life was pleasant and at times I could almost forget my problems with the law. There was, however, emptiness deep within me. I knew something was lacking besides peace.

A time came when I was alone, sitting on a fence, reflecting on my life. There was a half-bottle of wine in my hand and the other half was in me. My existences had an emptiness that could not be filled with anything I had yet found. Alcohol, drugs and women brought a temporary happiness that left quickly. My mind wandered to my childhood that I might dwell on something pleasant. There were those times when we made sporadic visits to church throughout my youth. Most of what was said in that church had slipped through my mind without taking hold. Those songs we used to sing never left me. It was not uncommon to find me singing one of them. What an odd site I must have made, sitting on a fence drinking wine, wanted by the police and as ungodly as a man could be, singing songs I learned in church.
“Jesus, hold my hand, I need thee every hour. Though this pilgrim land, protect me by thy power. Hear my feeble plea, O Lord Look down on me. When I kneel in prayer, I hope to meet you there. Blessed Jesus, hold my hand”.

As I sang my eyes began to fill with tears. Though I was a hardened convict, here I was fighting back tears when I felt an unseen presence of someone or something. It is the work of that unseen presence to call people to seek God's forgiveness. Later, when I read a Bible, I found out that unseen presence is called The Holy Spirit. God was not happy with the life I was living, but I lacked understanding in these matters. What I did understand was what this life had taught me. Never show weakness to anybody. If you can act cold and hard enough, nobody will want to try you. Have you ever considered the behavior of people behind bars, or in a bike club, or this type of situation in general? My lifestyle did not permit me to show signs of weakness to anyone, and I thought the tears were a sign of weakness. I wiped away the tears and resisted The Holy Spirit. He is mighty, but also gentle. He will not force himself on anyone. He stepped back and let me go my way.

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When summer was over, the girls returned to Louisiana and I returned to the farmhouse to stay with Kimberly and her friends. There had been a shortage of drugs since coming to this area, but now with a farmhouse full of hippies, there was an abundance. They would sit in the living room at night getting high and talking. One night, Kimberly was sitting in a chair reading Edgar Allen Poe. She had a kerosene lamp sitting in the window beside her for light. All these hippies were sitting on the floor in front of her hanging on every word. I slipped away quietly to the kitchen, covered my head and face with flour, then slipped out the back door. All eyes were fixed on Kimberly as I circled the house to the window behind her. Slowly I moved into view of the kerosene lamp. Suddenly, there was some horrendous screaming and laughing. They screamed and I laughed.
Three hippies had purchased the land next to the farm and had begun building a house. One of them, named Jimmy, asked me for help. Hippies on marijuana do not make good carpenters, but I liked the guy and agreed to help. The project was preposterous. There was no foundation. Four large rocks, each about the size of a car had been selected to build upon. The corners were not level, so additional stones were needed. Any place that has winters cold enough will experience a freeze-thaw cycle and that will cause rocks to migrate upwards. When the floor joists were added, they were covered with a thick sheet of plastic. That would keep the air and moisture from coming into the house. On top of that plastic, the floorboards were added before the roof was in place. There was a big rainstorm and the water ran between the floorboards and on to the plastic sheets. The next day, there were big, sagging pockets of water between every floor joist that contained fifty to seventy-five gallons of water each. We had to climb underneath with a knife and cut all the bubbles open to let the water drain. The structure was a large A-frame which meant it would have a huge roof. Jimmy had saved money by purchasing discontinued shingles. I was in utter disbelief when he showed me the shingles. He had every color of the rainbow.

A fire was needed to heat the house as the temperature began to drop. A woman and I were sleeping in a room over the kitchen. Someone, more at home in the city than the country, dumped the hot ashes from the kitchen stove. Not wanting to go far in the cold, they stood in the doorway and dumped them on a snowbank alongside the house. The ashes rolled down the snowbank and up against the house. A few hours later, when everybody was sleeping, the house caught fire. It was blazing furiously when Jimmy woke up and started screaming at the top of his lungs. “FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!” We all ran outside. Those hundred-year-old cedar logs burned like gasoline and it is a wonder no one died in that fire. There must have been a dozen or more of us standing in awe, watching how fast the house burned when we realized everybody was naked.
We knew the house would be burned down before the volunteer fire department arrived. We also knew it would be better if we had clothes on. The nearest neighbors, Daniel and Alice, were sleeping peacefully when a nude army descended upon their home. Before long we were all dressed in clothing that did not fit properly to greet the firemen. Was it possible that they were spending as much time looking at us as they spent looking at the fire? We were indeed a weird looking bunch when they arrived.

Without a house to live in, clothes that fit and marijuana to smoke, the hippy population at the farmhouse soon dwindled. There was an old building I tore apart and used for building materials to fix up the loft of a barn. Without money, it was necessary to salvage everything possible to make a suitable shelter. The weather changed quickly. Winter was beginning. The snow was getting deep. Daniel and Alice had taken me to a second-hand store run by a church where I was given some clothing. My best score was a long fake fur coat.
A young couple drove from Toronto to visit the farm and were able to park their car a few feet off the road. We were standing by their car talking when two cars drove up; both filled with R.C.M.P. The snow was deeper than I am tall in places. I dreaded running in the bitterly cold weather and decided I'd better try to bluff my way through.

Some of the Mounties got out of their cars and starting asking me questions. My answers were unable to satisfy them and running seemed to be my next best option. Knowing a hail of gunfire could stop me from ever reaching my goal, I began running to the distant forest. It was necessary to throw away my long fur coat because it slowed me down. Evidently, I took The Mounties by complete surprise. They thought I could not get far in such cold weather and deep snow, so they didn't pursue me immediately. They had underestimated my determination to elude capture. Apparently, it didn't take them long to realize the seriousness of that error. They eventually brought in dogs that picked up my trail. Unarmed, without food and poorly dressed for that weather meant the odds were against me.

Running was incredibly slow. Every step was a struggle against the snow and bitter cold. My efforts to escape looked even more dismal when I came to the shallow end of a lake with a huge marshy area covered with ice and snow. The marsh went right up to the road, which, by now, would be infested with Mounties. The lake was much
too big to go around leaving me with an unpleasant choice. I began crossing the marsh when my worst fears were realized. The ice was thinner than I had hoped and it broke. My feet were soaked and I began to wonder how long before they would freeze.

With the odds escalating against me, I continued to run as the sun was setting. Without it, I would have no sense of direction. Running parallel to a road became necessary. If I ventured too far into the bush and got lost, I ran the risk of becoming little more than an interesting article in the news after the spring thaw revealed my body. Freezing to death while lost in the "Great Canadian Wilderness" was not the happy ending I had envisioned for my life.

When I found the road, I kept my distance and began running parallel. It was dark. I began stumbling and falling often. Being totally exhausted didn't help the situation. At one point, I fell down a steep embankment. Had it been a much steeper fall, I might have been seriously injured. My muscles had become too cold to function properly. Thinking clearly was becoming a problem. Weariness started to destroy my sense of urgency. It must have been near midnight when I recognized the danger I was in. I believe I started hallucinating when I saw and heard things that weren't real. The cold would freeze me to death if I failed to seek help quickly. No one was going to put me in a cage again and I refused to lie down in the snow and give up. When I staggered to the road, I found it had been plowed and that made walking a little easier. There was a small cabin with lights still burning ahead of me. Dragging myself to their door, at that late hour, I knocked and hoped for the best.

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An older couple opened their door and they took me in without hesitation. They wrapped me in blankets and set me in front of the wood stove. It took a serious effort to remove my frozen boots. The bitter cold had taken most of the feeling out of my hands and feet. Perhaps the constant running was what keep me from losing my feet. Thankfully, I didn't lose anything even though the boots were frozen
onto my feet. They gave me some warm food and tried to dry my clothes. When asked about my circumstances, I told them the police were chasing me. They said they hadn't seen any Mounties and asked what my plans were. I thought the town of Barry's Bay offered my best hope. When I felt thawed out, I thanked them and prepared to leave. They offered to drive into Barry's Bay to see if there was a roadblock while I wait in their house. I welcomed their offer, knowing this information could bring some peace of mind. They returned within an hour to inform me that the roads were clear. I thanked these kind people again for their help and continued upon my journey with renewed vigor.

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After leaving the cabin, I stayed on the road. If a car approached, it would be easy to hide behind the snow banks on both sides of the road. Staying as dry as possible had become a priority. The walking was easier now, but still very cold and I had no idea what to do when I arrived at Barry's Bay. My situation had not improved much because I still had to leave that area. It seemed a nearly insurmountable task. As I neared the small city, I recognized a well-lit building ahead. It was the hospital and they had to have a waiting room. If I could enter it quietly and wait until dawn, it would give me time to thaw out again and formulate a plan. The main door was unlocked, and unfortunately, it turned out to be a small hospital.

Almost as soon as I opened the door, a young man confronted me. After explaining my intentions, he reluctantly led me to their waiting room. I reassured him that I would be leaving within a couple of hours and he returned to his duties. In fifteen minutes he was back to inform me I would have to leave. Apparently one of his superiors had discussed their displeasure with him regarding my intentions.

A few months previously, during the summer, I had encountered some gentlemen roaming around near the farmhouse. We talked a while, and they told me they planned to purchase an adjacent parcel of land. One of them lived in Barry's Bay and taught school. When I had
answered their questions, they asked if I'd mind keeping an eye on the property.

I remembered that school teacher and asked for the phone book. I found his number and called, stating my desperation, and pleaded with him to take me in, if only for a few hours. He reluctantly agreed. The fellow at the hospital offered to drive me that short distance to his house. Parking lots in Chicago are larger than Barry’s Bay, so he had no difficulty finding the address. By the time I was knocking on the door, the school teacher was having second thoughts. He appeared half awake as he opened the door and started asking questions. We talked a while and I convinced him that I’d leave in time for him to work that day. He calmed down a bit and informed me I must be gone by eight thirty or nine a.m., and went back to bed.

Lying on the couch waiting for dawn gave me the time I needed to think. There was a second-hand store I had visited in the fall about twenty miles from where I was. It was the place I had gone for clothing after the fire and was operated by a church. It appeared to be the perfect place to seek assistance. When the schoolteacher arose, he did not appear rested and seemed eager for me to leave. He calmed down again when I reassured him I was leaving.

We found a phone number for the place and I called to ask for help. I made it plain that I was being sought by the police and wanted to leave the area. He agreed to send someone to pick me up in thirty minutes. A relieved schoolteacher offered me some food and left to prepare for the day. The driver arrived and I thanked the schoolteacher before departing.

Upon entering the car, it was agreed that I should crouch down so as not to be seen. As we drove, I found out the driver’s name was Dave. Besides the second-hand store, they had a church building, a farm, and a few other people they were trying to help.

We arrived at the farm and I was introduced to some other people. They gave me a room and we set about to change my appearance. We
started with a haircut and shave. Dave gave me some clothes from their second-hand store. Thanks to a little food and some rest, I was beginning to feel at ease again.

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That evening, Dave told me to grab a coat, because he had something to show me. He led me to a barn where a large cow was laying on its side. He said she is going to have a calf soon. Watching this sounded like more fun than running from police dogs. Watching that calf begin her life was amazing. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if I could be born again and start my life all over? There would be many things that I would do differently. How could one person make so many wrong choices? My life was a fiasco. I thanked Dave and retired for a good night's sleep.

The next day we agreed that I needed to leave as soon as possible. They found an old suitcase for me as well as some more clothes. They gave me seventy-five dollars to help me get started at my destination, Hamilton, Ontario. Dave took me to a small restaurant, which doubled as a bus stop. We showed up on time, so I would not be hanging around for long. Dave went inside to purchase the ticket while I waited beside the bus that had already arrived. With my back to the window of the restaurant and facing the bus, I could see a clear reflection in the bus windows. Soon after Dave went inside, a female employee came to the window and appeared to be interested in me. It was unlikely that she knew I was watching her. She left the window and soon returned with a man. There were other people waiting to board the bus, but when she returned with the man, I could see they were looking at me. Dave returned with my ticket and I boarded the bus.

To say that I was extremely cautious with anything out of the ordinary would be putting it mildly. Perhaps it was ridiculous to go to the extremes that I practiced, but I had no intentions of losing my freedom. Most people would have dismissed that casual glance out the window as unimportant, but I knew better. Law enforcement agencies had alerted their community to watch for anyone matching my
description. The Mounties probably had no idea who I was. My mugshot had circulated but so had thousands of others. By now they knew that I was serious about evading capture and that I was on that bus. Their plans to arrest me this time would be well thought out.

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It was about 11 A.M. when I boarded the bus. The memory of those people in the window at the bus stop had been etched in my mind for nearly an hour when we stopped for a lunch break. The bus driver informed us we had thirty minutes to eat, or we could remain on the bus. I was still deep in thought as I entered the restaurant. They also sold gas and had some motel rooms.

This took place in the early 1970’s when many of the hippies had moved to the country. They had hopes of growing their own marijuana, living as nudists, sharing causal sex and getting back to nature. A weapon the Canadian government used against this new breed of farmer was an “open warrant.” It was the same as any other warrant except it had no name on it and could be used anywhere at any time. This was a rare thing and news of it got around quick. Daniel had heard from a hippy commune that there had been a Mountie in this part of northern Ontario recently with an open warrant. There was another odd thing about this Mountie that came to my attention. His manner of clothing; he liked to dress in Mod, a popular clothing style in the seventies.

The restaurant portion of the building was larger than I expected. After locating a table where everybody could be watched, I sat down, with a drink. Within three minutes, a car drove up alongside the building. A man wearing a Mod tie walked into the restaurant. He ordered a coffee and sat in front of the bus driver. This undercover cop had no intentions of making a move inside the building nor would it be when we returned to the bus. He had come in alone to get a good look at me and verified that I was on the bus. Their plans were now obvious. A roadblock would be set up a few miles down the road. They probably thought it would be easier to surround a bus on the
highway than to rush into a restaurant, where things could get messy. He was giving the bus driver instructions on what he should do. They made their plans while I acted like I didn’t have a clue, but I started watching for my best opportunity.

We all returned to the bus at about the same time. The Mountie watched us board the bus from his car, then drove out of the driveway a few moments before we would have. The Mountie was out of our sight almost immediately because the driveway entered the highway at a curve in the road. That was my moment! I shouted for the driver to stop before he could enter the highway.

“Where? Here?” he questioned

“Yes, right here!” I exclaimed.

He stopped. I told him to open the door because I was getting off. I got out.

The driver continued on his way, and I ran back to the front of the building where they sold gas. As I ran, I looked over my shoulder and saw an Ontario Provincial Police car go past the driveway to follow the bus into their roadblock.

There would be precious little time before the Mounties discovered I was not on the bus. A run into the bush would not succeed this time because they would be better prepared today. I offered one of the gas station’s customers a handful of money to take me five or ten miles down the road. He looked frightened and backed away shaking his head.

There was a pay phone on the wall with cards and stickers around it. One card I saw was from a taxi company. I caught an employee passing by and asked, “Do you have taxis out here in the middle of nowhere?”

“Yeah, sure. Call them” he said pointing at the card I saw.
Time was running out and I was ready to try anything. When I called and informed the dispatcher where I was, he said, ‘I got a car that’s about to drive past that place right now’.

“That’s great,” I said, “Send him in here”.

The taxi arrived almost immediately. While leaping into the car, I got down on the floor, and said, “Get out of here quickly!”

As he drove out, I asked him if he could see the police. He looked up at his mirror and said, “Yes, they’re driving in the other driveway now.” He took me about ten miles to another place of business with a phone. I gave him most of the money that I had and thanked him. The extra money he received would help him develop a case of amnesia. He drove away.

I hurried inside and phoned Dave. When I explained my situation, he agreed to help again. He and another guy were taking a five-ton truck to Toronto. He offered to pick me up in about an hour. They found me and dropped me off in Peterborough, a hundred miles south of where I was. I purchased a bus ticket and then hid in a movie theater until the time of its departure.

Eventually, we arrived in Toronto. I called Jimmy’s brother. He picked me up and I shared my latest adventure with him. He proceeded to explain his inability to offer help because of an impending divorce. We arrived at his place. After meeting his soon to be ex-wife, I wholeheartedly agreed. He called Jimmy who agreed to provide temporary shelter.

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Nothing could have prepared me for my new place of residence at Rochdale University.

Rochdale University (usually referred to as Rochdale Collage) was an experiment in co-operative living and student-centered education. It opened in 1968 and offered no structured courses, curriculum, exams, or degrees. The six million dollar skyscraper on
Bloor Street became an eighteen story fortress in the middle of Toronto. It was the target of police raids and eventually mass evictions. One problem in its early days was its open-door policy. Hundreds of street people would crash in Rochdale's halls at night.

The governing council set up a paid security force to be on 24-hour alert. Some of these security people were bikers and an unofficial alliance with the Vagabonds motorcycle club developed. The tenants were warned of imminent police raids by the security forces who set off the fire alarm. By 1971, the press was calling Rochdale "North America's largest drug distribution warehouse", and saying “hashish, pot and LSD were in large supply." Anyone could obtain a BA from Rochdale by donating $25 to the college and answering a skill-testing question, such as "What is the capital of Canada?" An MA was earned by donating $50. A skill-testing question still had to be answered, but the applicant got to pick the question. A Ph.D. could be had for $100, no questions asked.

As we entered the front door, we were greeted by two bikers and three large German shepherd dogs. They looked past Jimmy to give me an inquisitive once over. "He'll be staying with me for a while," Jimmy answered in response to their enquiries. He gave me a mini tour on the way to his apartment.

I have never seen so many hippies and so much drug use in my entire life. Once inside Rochdale, the residents felt free to do as they pleased. The sale and use of drugs was everywhere. Some places in the building were so full of marijuana smoke that it would have been a waste of money to buy your own. It was called a time of free love and Rochdale exemplifies this perfectly. An active sexual person found no shortage of partners in that atmosphere. The roof was accessible from the eighteenth floor for sunbathing with or without clothing. It was not uncommon to find sunbathers naked in the elevator returning to their apartment. There was a small store on the second floor as well as a cafeteria. A guy named Reggie showed weekly movies in a large room next to the cafeteria. It was unlike anything I had ever seen.
Jimmy's place was a small one bedroom, and that was used as his wife's workshop. She was a Japanese lady who made leather clothing. I slept on the floor of the workshop with their German shepherd. Having at least one friend can make it much easier to start a life in a new place. I'm not talking about the German shepherd. Michael, the owner of the cafeteria, offered me a job cooking. The first thing I did was clean the kitchen. That place was so clean that Michael later told me I was the only one who made him feel uncomfortable in his own kitchen.

Through that job, I made friends and met many people. The women at Rochdale could be rather blunt at times. When it came to being blunt, I think Laura held the title. Laura and I worked together in the cafeteria. The second day we worked together, she was being sexually suggestive. I responded with, “I could do some amazing things with a can of whipped cream and a box of raisins”. When I got off work later that day, she handed me a can of whipped cream and a box of raisins. That’s the day I moved in with her. Actually that might be somewhat of an overstatement considering that I was wearing everything I owned at the time.

Careful observation revealed that Laura had not attended a finishing school. When my income increased, I took her to a fine Chinese restaurant. At the end of the meal, a waiter brought steaming, hot towels. Laura promptly started wiping her armpits with a towel. Things that are entertaining for a bike club or hippy commune do not always go over so well at some of your better restaurants.

Soon my mother came to visit. I told mom to find Rochdale and ask for the cafeteria. My mother was not easy to intimidate. She was accustomed to being around bikers, and drugs, etc. She entered Rochdale and was greeted by the same bikers and their German shepherd dogs. When they asked, she said she was going to see me. She then looked them in the face and said, "Don't worry, I'm cool". They were still laughing when they told me about the incident later.
Laura and I soon found an apartment outside Rochdale. That drug distribution warehouse was not the safest place for a fugitive to hide. Our apartment was on the second floor over the pizza place. Someone told me about a one hundred fifty gallon aquarium for sale with free delivery. It was inexpensive and I thought it would give me something to do indoors. Staying indoors after dark reduced my chances of an unwanted encounter with Toronto’s finest. The tank was set up before I realized it might have been too heavy for a second-floor apartment. After two weeks I noticed the floor had dropped about an inch lower than the molding. I decided to watch the situation closely with the hope that the floor would not settle anymore. Shortly after that, I became startled in the middle of the night by the loudest crash you can imagine. In that instance, I knew the tank had gone through the floor and into the business below. Alarms would go off. The police would soon arrive. The apartment and business underneath would have extensive damage. Frantically leaping out of bed. I had to get out of there immediately and leave Laura to face the consequences alone. I turned on a light and was shocked to see the tank was still there. How could this be? A look out my open window revealed the answer. A huge tree limb had fallen and crushed the car beneath. My heart rate returned to normal within two hours and I went back to bed.
CHAPTER 7

The Princess & the Toad

My friends in the bike club back in Flint were always looking for ways to stun or shock people. One guy who worked in the hospital had the job of destroying human body parts. He was supposed to burn all of them but would bring home bones and parts that the guys in the club would fashion into jewelry. A guy showed me a maltese cross he claimed to have fashioned from a human skull. He said it was too soft and broke easily. Although I never saw one, I was told that some of the guys made earrings out of a human fetus. Another guy showed up one day with a handful of artificial eyes. They were made of a hard substance and looked exactly like a real eye. By grinding off the back to make them flat, they could be mounted into a ring. It made for a shocking piece of jewelry. When I left Flint, I still had one of those eyes in my pocket.

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My job outside Rochdale was working for Tom, the manager of a deli. Tom, liked me. Although unintended I tried his patience more than once. Tamika and Leticia were two women I worked with. We got along beautifully until I brought my eye to work one day. We had a glass that was used to serve an ice cream sundae that I filled with fruit cocktail. The glass eye was placed on top, instead of a cherry. There was a booth at the back for employees. When Tamika and Leticia set down for their break, I brought the fruit cocktail and placed it in front of Tamika. I have always thought that some black women had a tendency to overreact, but this was ridiculous. If I had any idea
that she was going to scream like that, I would never have given her that fruit cocktail. Tom came running from his office. He was thankful it was not a robbery or murder. His first look was at her … and the next was at me. He asked, “What did you do now?” The restaurant went back to normal and I decided to mend some of my evil ways before I became unemployed.

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Jake had a silk screening company in a warehouse. He offered me a job. Jake stayed high all the time, which is probably why he was a poor businessman. Employees frequently ran to the bank to cash their paycheck before the account was emptied. Being the last one to the bank meant you would have to wait a few days for your money. Jake once called me into his office/living room/bedroom to meet Xaviera Hollander. She is the New York Madam and later Penthouse columnist whose 1971 book, "The Happy Hooker", sold more than 17 million copies. His keeping company with a prostitute was not good news. He never had enough money in the bank to meet payroll without her “friendship”.

Jake's business occupied a building that was part of a large complex. Each day when I came to work, I saw a steel ladder going up the side of another warehouse, about ten feet in height, to a large square door. Someone had built an apartment on the second floor and used that door and ladder as an additional way in and out. That place intrigued me. When I saw the tenants carrying out furniture, I decided to investigate. My search led me to an older gentleman named Tommy, who was the caretaker for the entire complex. He said the place was rented as a studio or storage but was not supposed to be an apartment. The company didn't care, it's just that it wasn't zoned for residential. The place was perfect. It was in an alley a half block from the busy corner of Yonge and Wellesley near downtown.

Other than my one hundred fifty gallon aquarium, I didn’t own much, making the move easy. To my delight, the studio was on two floors, the second and the third. Each floor of the studio was accessible
by a door on a different floor. The warehouse was a complex maze of doors and hallways beyond description.

I rented out the top floor of my studio a few times with various degrees of success. My most memorable tenant was Chris, a tall, slim, young man in his early 20's. Chris said he had been married once, but he and his wife had gotten into different things. As I looked out the window one day, I saw a nurse coming down the alley and heading toward the warehouse. I figured it had to be Chris’s sister because she looked like his twin. As it turned out, Chris liked dressing up as a nurse sometimes. Different things, huh?

***

Laura moved out and Peppermint Patty moved in. She was an intelligent woman and I enjoyed her sarcasm immensely. Patty enjoyed music and those aquariums that helped me to occupy my time. Steve was the name I was using. Some friends were surprised by the size of my aquarium. They started calling me "Fishy Steve". For obvious reasons, I did my best to put an end to that nickname. In retrospect, it may have been a better name than the one Patty tried to give me. We were playing gin rummy when I looked at the score sheet and read “The Princes” and “The Toad”.

Patty’s dad, John, renewed their relationship after his release from prison. My mother came to visit again and brought The Weasel. When Patty's dad met The Weasel, he invited him to play cards. He thought Roy would be easy to clean out because he was drunk all the time. John invited one of his friends over to give himself better odds in the game. They played Gin Rummy for hours. When the game was over, The Weasel, who was an American visitor to Canada, stood up and said, “Well thank ya for the game and the drinks. You’ve treated me well for a bunch of foreigners”. It may have been that same night when a drunk Weasel had been in the washroom for an excessive length of time. The silence was broken suddenly when he awoke from his nap on the toilet by yelling, “Take a swing at me, will ya?” While swinging his fists at his imaginary foe, he promptly fell off the toilet.
Jake went out of business and I took a job at a record store on Yonge Street. One day a truck stopped in front of the record store. Two guys unloaded a jukebox and brought it inside. My manager, Reggie, said the store was going to have a drawing to give it away. That jukebox was going home with me one way or another! Reggie soon showed up with a box that had a narrow slot in the top. He also had stacks of entry forms for the drawing. The paper entry forms were about the size of a pack of cigarettes. They required a name, address and phone number. For a while I watched all these people enter the drawing to win my jukebox. People dropped the entry forms into the box where they would lay flat at the bottom. That’s it, I thought. The box needed to be flooded with phony entries that were crumpled up so they would not lay flat and fill the box to the top.

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Jacqueline, a girl I knew, was surprised when I told her she would win a jukebox. She had apparently entered a drawing at the record store. When that call came, I asked her to say thanks and we could talk afterwards. Before the big day, I filled out as many entry forms as possible. Each one was wadded up and then straightened out again. That way it would not lay flat in the box. Much to my surprise, Reggie asked me to do the drawing and make the call. Unbelievably, I drew the wrong name. It was horrifying. I made the call and “gee whiz” nobody was answering. After hanging up, I suggested we draw again, so this thing didn’t drag out for days. Reggie was easily persuaded that we needed to get this over and had me draw again. That time I got the right one and had Jacqueline on the phone in minutes informing her that she had won. She laughed and I told her she could pick it up whenever she was ready. When I hung up the phone, Reggie asked me if she was excited. “Oh yes! Very excited,” I told him. Arrangements were made and the jukebox was delivered to the warehouse.

Working in a record store provided ample opportunity to meet females. People were pretty casual about sex at that time. The girl I worked with came home with me when asked. One evening a woman
entered the store and talked to me for less than ten minutes before we were upstairs laying on a sheet of cardboard. There was a lot of stuff like that going on back then. I figured I had been a little too casual about sex when Reggie said to me, “I know you’ve been fooling around with my wife.”

Friends had started taking me to concerts so I might catch up on some of the current music. Living in Toronto meant there was no shortage of concerts. I remember seeing Randy Newman, Bonnie Raitt, Joe Cooker, Albert Collins, J.J. Cale, Leon Redbone, Linda Ronstadt, and many others. There was a blues concert on Toronto Island one year. One group that Johnny Otis brought with him was “The Three Tons of Joy”. Those three black ladies may have weighed close to their claim of three tons. The sight of them turning their back to the audience and gyrating their hips while singing, "I’m built for comfort, I ain’t built for speed," is an image that has been indelibly engraved in my memory. However, there were many newer bands I knew nothing about, even though I worked in a record store.

My ignorance of current music was demonstrated one Halloween. A small group of people entered the record store that night. There were four guys and a bunch of girls that appeared too young to be out without a note from mom. The four guys had their faces painted up for Halloween. They proceeded to the center of the floor in front of the cash register. Two of them got on the floor side by side on their hands and knees and the other two got on top of them so their faces were all close together. One of them growled and stuck out an enormous tongue. With all I’d seen in my life, I just stared at them, waiting for more, and was disappointed when I found out that was it. After a few moments, they got back on their feet and walked out the door, without saying a word. One of the teeny boppers walked up to me like I was the dumbest thing she had ever seen and asked, “Don’t you know who they are?”

When I shook my head the wrong way, she went over to the records and returned with one that had their picture on the cover. With
utter disgust, she slapped it on the counter in front of me, and said, “Here.” What a funny name for a band ... Kiss.

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One day I volunteered to run an errand to the office supply store across the street. On my return trip, I noticed a police cruiser passing on the opposite side of the street. He thought he recognized me from my mugshot and made a U-turn on that very busy street. He leaped out of his car and confronted me there on the sidewalk while I was about to enter the record store. The odds didn't seem to be too great since we were on Yonge Street near the corner of Bloor. That's one of the busiest intersections in the city. The sidewalks were full of people and the street was jammed with cars. I knew the subway was close by and it was, after all, a single cop. He seemed unsure of himself and I thought I could bluff my way out of this.

As we sat in his car, he told me I was wanted. He had not arrested me, so I knew he wasn't sure who I was. I told him he was wrong as he stared at me trying to remember. Soon he told me what I had done to change my appearance and he was correct. I continued insisting he was mistaken and told him I worked at the record store we were in front of. It was beginning to get uncomfortable when he waved at another cruiser that was driving by. When that officer came to his window, he asked him who I was. After a long hard look, he was unable to identify me. I continued lying and convinced him they were mistaken. They released me. However, one of them said he'd return to the record store some day and show me a mugshot of my twin brother. That was one picture I didn’t want to see. Upon leaving his patrol car, I entered the record store. At any moment, those cops might change their minds about letting me go. They might discover a flaw in the story I told them or even remember who I was. There was no question that at least one of them had seen my mugshot. It was time to take a short vacation.

Mike was in our store that day. He was employed by the head office and worked at all the stores in the area. When I walked back in the store, as the police drove away, I told Mike I needed a ride
somewhere. He looked worried, but I kept the pressure on and he slowly relented. We went out the back door and got in his car. When asked where I wanted to go, I said, “Just get me out of here”. I leaned over in the seat so I could not be seen by another car as he drove. He looked scared and kept asking where he could drop me off. Looking back on the incident, I never made any threats and only asked him to help, but he was afraid of me. He was soon so freaked out that I told him to drop me off near a subway. I left him and phoned a girl I knew. She said I could stay at her place awhile. It was wise to wait a few days and see if that cop would dismiss the whole episode from his mind or pursue it further. Returning to the record store was out of the question. It was unnecessary to move from the warehouse because of the tremendous number of people in that downtown area. The police were not snooping around the warehouses, so I returned home.
My future as a record salesman came to an end but continued as a collector. Record collecting became an obsession, and my studio soon looked like a store from 1959. Original records were in demand and difficult to locate. Someone started a newspaper auction called “Goldmine” that catered to people like me seeking out of print records. Two local stores had also sprung up. Don Keele, the owner of Don’s Discs, relived me of my excess cash in return for rare records. One warehouse contained five record display bins from a previous tenant before I was around. The bins came home with me and soon held hundreds of records. The shelving unit that I built on one wall was fifteen feet long and five shelves high. It held thousands of records. First-time visitors thought they were in a record store. The walls were covered with autographed photos and 50’s memorabilia. Much of my time was spent in pursuit of these older singers and their records. Many of them were doing the oldies circuit and made appearances in Toronto. Arriving at a performance with a rare or early recording ensured a visit with most singers. It often prompted an invitation to their table or dressing room.

I arrived early at the El Macombo to see Fats Domino and was invited up to the dressing room. Don Keele was there with some other collectors I knew. Fats was short, overweight and had a fur coat that looked like it would drag on the ground. Every finger was adorned
with a ring that looked too big. He was a friendly, down-home kind of guy who put on a fabulous performance

Del Shannon came to town for a show. He was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and that made us almost neighbors. Del invited Peppermint Patty and me to his dressing room. He was warm and friendly, but at the same time troubled and lonely. That was something I could easily relate to. Some years later, I thought of that loneliness I sensed in him when I heard that he had ended his life. In 1990, he shot himself in the head with a .22 caliber rifle. I hoped I would never come to such an end because of the nerve-racking stress that being a fugitive produced.

Don Keele invited Patty and me to spend the evening with him, his wife Linda, and some old singers. Sonny Till, the lead singer for The Orioles, had been living with Don for several months. It sounded like a good opportunity to get acquainted. When we arrived at the nightclub, I was pleasantly surprised to find that a guy who had sung with the Five Keys was there. It did not take long before the tone for the evening was set. When the drinks took a few minutes longer than usual, it was obvious to Sonny and his friends to be an act of racism. There was so much bitterness in them it was difficult to enjoy the evening. It seemed that every incident less than perfect was viewed as mistreatment because they were black. Before coming to the club, one of them had complained about Linda’s brother. He had nodded his head in greeting and Linda’s brother failed to return the nod. It was obvious to them that Linda’s brother was a racist until they were asked to forgive the man because he was blind. I remember Sonny Till as a legendary singer but lacking as a person.

We enjoyed hearing and meeting many singers. Space will not permit a detailed description of all the encounters we had. But they included Roy Orbison, Buddy Knox, Jack Scott, Chubby Checker, The Shirelles, Ray Smith, Chuck Berry, Frank Two Horn Motley, Robert Gordon and Link Ray, Bobby Vee, Bobby Curtola, Bill Haley, Johnny
Cash, Bo Diddley, James Dozier of the Avalons, Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee, The Beach Boys, Muddy Waters, and many others.

I had befriended the owners of a store called "Records on Wheels." It was a family run business that had a most uncommon beginning. During that time, the record business in Toronto was dominated by two huge downtown stores. A & A Records & Sam the Record Man were almost next door to each other. Vito & Don were Italian brothers that had acquired an old bus and turned it into a mobile record store by exchanging the seats for record racks. The new Records on Wheels store was then parked as close to the competition as possible. The best option left to A & A Records and Sam the Record Man was constant complaints to the city to enforce the time limit on the parking meters. While admiring their persistence, one could not help but laugh at such a comical site.

“Your attention, please. The store will be moving in five minutes. Would all costumers please bring their purchases to the cash register at the front of the store? Please exit the bus while we drive around the block and find another parking spot.”

Eventually, the bus was abandoned in favor of a more traditional store that stayed in one place. Their business was near my warehouse and I frequently visited them. Don called one day and invited me to meet Frank Zappa. Frank was doing a concert at Maple Leaf Gardens that week and he stayed with Vito when he was in town. I’d never met him before and said I’d be right over. Knowing what kind of guy Frank was, I knew I’d have to bring something unusual for him to sign. My first thought was to take an old Sinatra album. Then when I walked into the store and saw him, I would look disappointed, looking back and forth between the album cover and him. Then I would then approach him apologetically explaining I had misunderstood and brought an album by the wrong Frank. After a moment’s hesitation, I’d asked him if he would mind signing it anyway. It was a good plan and I liked it.
When I left my door to exit the building through the maze of hallways, an even better plan emerged. The first door I passed in the hallway was to an infrequently used washroom. There was a famous poster of Frank sitting on a toilet call “Zappa Crappa.” With the thought of that poster in mind, I entered the washroom and removed a rough looking seat from the toilet. It was placed in a trash bag and tucked under my arm as I headed for Records on Wheels grinning all the way. Upon entering the store, I encountered a large bald guy who looked like he might have done well as a debt collector. He was John Smothers, aka “Bald Headed-John,” and was Frank’s bodyguard. Frank was signing album covers for some fans when I approached. The toilet seat got his and everyone else’s attention. He kept his composure but was amused by the whole affair. I sensed some of those about me were kicking themselves for not having thought of something more unique than an album cover for an autograph. He put on a memorable concert and at one point said, “This next song is for Vito....It’s nice to see an Italian get ahead for a change”.

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Robert Hayes was the next name I began to use. Being a fugitive had not destroyed my sense of humor. In 1964 at the Tokyo Olympics, Robert Hayes won the gold medal in the 100 meters, tying the world record of 10.05 seconds, and he anchored the United States 400-meter relay team to victory in a world-record 39.06. Hayes' relay split was a sensational 8.6 and he earned the title "World's Fastest Human". Nearly 20 years later, The Los Angeles Times called it "the most astonishing sprint of all time". Ironically, because of his drug and alcohol problems, he served 10 months in prison in 1979 for delivering drugs to an undercover agent. The new name came at the right time to help me land the perfect job.

Tommy, the caretaker, had not been seen for several days. When I inquired about him, I learned he had fallen ill and died suddenly. The property management company was trying to replace him. With my knowledge of the warehouses, I would be a good candidate. The
complex consisted of two parking lots, some retail businesses on Yonge Street, and five big warehouses. The warehouses contained storage, a half dozen studios like mine, four discotheques, a large tavern, a company that made the props for Toronto's movie industry, and many smaller businesses. My setup seemed perfect: good identification, a legal job, all the women, alcohol, and drugs I wanted and yet there was an emptiness. My life often seemed without purpose. Something was missing other than my freedom. I would have to solve that another day. For the time being, I was busy striving to keep one step ahead of the law.

Someone told me about the murder of Pierre Laporte. It gave me an idea. When Robert Bourassa was elected Premier of Quebec in 1970, he appointed Pierre Laporte as his Vice-Premier and Minister of Labour. On October 10, 1970, Laporte was kidnapped from his home in Saint-Lambert, Quebec, by a gang of radical Quebec nationalists known as the FLQ (Front de liberation du Quebec a.k.a. Quebec Liberation Front). They held him hostage in an anti-government protest. The events that followed became known as the "October Crisis" when martial law was declared, and Pierre Laporte's dead body was found in the trunk of a car seven days later on October 17. His kidnappers were subsequently captured. On November 6, 1970, a police raid on the hiding place of the members of the Chénier cell of the FLQ led to the arrest of Bernard Lortie. However, most of the members of the cell got away by hiding behind a false wall in a closet of the apartment. They escaped the next day through the back door. My studio had the perfect place for a false wall and I began work immediately. The space I made behind a false wall was about thirty inches wide and twelve feet long. It was concealed so well that no one ever detected its existence. It was one more avenue of escape if needed.

While exploring the warehouses, I discovered an old abandoned safe. I went down the block to the car dealership to find a forklift driver. He said he'd be glad to put the safe through my side door for me. It was heavy and wasn't going anywhere without his help. Once
inside my place, I called around and found a guy who opened it and set a new combination. My candy bars, potato chips and snacks could now be stored without fear of theft. Visitors asked, “Why don’t you keep your money in there instead of that stuff?” I’d tell them, “Nobody ever steals my money, but they're always taking my candy bars and potato chips.” Having solved the problem of keeping my snacks safe perhaps I would be free to spend more time on the difficult task of keeping myself safe.
The Harder I Tried

The harder I tried to avoid contact with law enforcement officials, the more I encountered them. As previously stated, the first door I passed in the hallway when leaving my apartment was an infrequently used washroom. That’s the room where I acquired the toilet seat for Frank Zappa. Unlike the rest of the massive, steel covered, wood doors found throughout the warehouse, this room had a standard interior door. One day, in a fit of comical rage, I kicked the door apart. It was a highly intelligent move on my part since I was the caretaker and the one responsible for repairing or replacing the door. I managed to reassemble the door, so it functioned properly even though it looked like Bruce Lee had used it to practice Kung Fu. My sense of humor got the best of me and when the door was back in place. I found felt tip marker. In large lettering across the door, I wrote, “Stop me before I kill again”.

Months later, a retail store on the floor above had a welder in to do some work. This amateur sent sparks down a crack between the wall and the floor into the washroom below setting it afire. When smoke started rising through their floor, they called the fire department. A large cup of coffee would have sufficed to extinguish the smoldering fire. All was well till the “serial arsonist’s” threat on the door was discovered.

Here was a killer who would stop at nothing. This obviously was a case for the police as well as the arsonist squad. Perhaps to be on the safe side, the bomb squad should check out the rest of the building.
Fortunately, leveler heads prevailed when I assured the fire marshal that the threat had been on the door for a long time. By then the amateur welder had been located, and it became clear that the dogs and various squads would not be needed at this crime scene. Thankfully I would not be grilled by half of the city’s law enforcement agencies and was allowed to leave. A more determined effort must be made to avoid these people.

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Over the years I have had many strange experiences. Perhaps the strangest one was nothing more than a phone call. The phone rang when I was at home in the warehouse. When I answered, a man asked if Pame Burton was there. Did I hear correctly? My mind raced like crazy trying to puzzle out that question. Would the American law call and ask for Pame? Why would they do that? It sounded like a local call. Why would any branch of the Canadian law call and ask for Pame? Was this some kind of trick to hear my voice? Did the caller want to see what I would say or do? What are the odds of someone calling the wrong number and asking for my ex-wife? You would not believe how many thoughts went through my mind in the five seconds I took before I answered. “Sorry, but you must have the wrong number.” After I hung up, I thought about that for a long time before I decided to dismiss it as a wrong number.

There were a few more unauthorized apartments in the warehouse. One of them was occupied by Cynthia. In the course of my job, we needed to talk. I knocked on her door. Much to my dismay, it was not her smiling face that greeted me when the door opened. One of the R.C.M.P.s who was in the process of tearing her place apart in their search for drugs invited me in.

“Who are you,” he asked.

An aggravated Cynthia said, “Oh, leave him alone, he’s just my landlord”.

“Is this true?” the Mountie asked.
I told him it was true and I was there on business. He pointed to a picture on the wall and asked, “Ain’t that you in the picture?”

Cynthia did not have pictures of me that I knew about. To keep the cop happy I took a look and was surprised. The guy in the picture actually did look like me. It would be a waste of time to swear up and down that it was not me, so I agreed with him.

“That does look like me, but it’s not.”

“Are you sure that’s not you?” he retorted.

“It’s positively not.” After some more words, I was dismissed. I needed to stop running into these guys. Maybe it would be best to look outside for police cars before I knocked on anybody’s door again.

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One business in the complex was a large clothing store. The back of the store exited into the hallway that ran throughout the building through a set of heavy-duty steel doors. A kid was visiting me and said he wanted my help to take some clothes out of the store. He would bring them to my place and then take them home in a less conspicuous manner. He offered me whatever clothing I wanted.

“What’s your plan to get into the store?” I asked.

He said, “Those are some strong doors, but there is another way.”

The whole back wall of the store faces the hall. Walls are made of two by fours and drywall. He could use a knife to cut a hole in the drywall beside them. He had looked around inside the store when it was open and found a spot that would not be noticed for quite a while. The store closed and he came to my place to be sure we were still on track. When things were fairly quiet for the night, he went into the hallway behind the store. He found the spot he wanted and cut an opening big enough to fit through. By cutting the hole at floor level, he could close it up again by simply replacing the piece of drywall. If
there were no powder left on the floor from where he cut the drywall, it might not be seen for months and could be reused.

Two of the discotheques in my care were run by men that didn't get along. Giuseppe, the man who operated the smaller discotheque, had the better financial backing. Sansalone ran the other one had the better location and a larger space. Giuseppe wanted Sansalone out of business so he could have his location. The Mounties received an anonymous tip that Sansalone had a half an ounce of cocaine under his car seat. They found the cocaine under the seat in his convertible, which incidentally had the top down. A small army of Mounties proceeded to Sansalone’s disco in an attempt to find his main drug stash. Unknown to me, they were tearing his place apart in their search, when I entered on company business. As cops turned toward me, one asked, "Who are you?" Before I could respond, Sansalone said "Leave him alone, he’s just the landlord." (I seemed to be hearing that a lot lately.)

The Mountie asked, "Is that true?"

A nod of my head affirmed it to be so.

"Have you got any identification?"

"Well, I’m sure I have something in the back of this warehouse where I live". The Mountie called my bluff and said, “O.K. let's go take a look.” If things did go south, it was better with just the two of us and not twenty of them and one of me. We walked around to the back of the warehouse and proceeded to my door.

In an attempt to find more things to occupy my time, I began making wine. During the secondary fermentation, the wine sets for weeks in five-gallon glass bottles called carboys. Each carboy holds twenty-six to thirty bottles of wine. I had built a large table to hold thirty-four of these five-gallon carboys just inside my door. The yield on that table was close to one thousand bottles of wine, and that was not counting what had already been bottled. When I opened my door, the first thing that Mountie saw was thirty-four carboys full of wine.
His mouth fell open when I confirmed his suspicions of what he was looking at. He glanced around the studio, then looked back at the wine in awe.

He took another look at me and said, "Forget it, you ain’t got a drug problem". He then turned around and walked out.

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Even when I was not walking in on drug busts, I could still manage to show up in places deemed unhealthy for a fugitive. A fellow record collector named Rob was the manager of A & A Records. He knew of my fondness for Science fiction movies, and that prompted him to call me. He had been given four tickets to a new movie premier and invited us. When the movie ended I knew, Star Wars was going to be a big one. What I didn’t know was that we would walk out of the theater to be greeted by news cameras. They wanted interviews about the movie. I did some quick evasive action in an attempt to avoid the evening news. Rob did a movie review as I slipped farther away to wait on him. I could not seem to avoid attention.
CHAPTER 10

Jay Cochrane, John Hammond Jr, & Bob Dylan

The largest of the four discotheques was called David’s, a gay club, frequented by both male and female members. When I had business with the club, I dealt with Sandy or Jay. Shortly before I left that area, Sandy was brutally murdered.

Jay was playing on a unicycle in the alley when a friend and I were going out the door. The balance he demonstrated was incredible. While we were watching him, two-foot patrolman joined us. Jay offered the unicycle to the cops and asked if they wanted to try. Maybe I just imagined it, but the look on one cop's face seemed to say, "If this faggot can ride it, then I can do it too". The officer could not believe how difficult it was to stay on the unicycle for even five seconds. With a defeated look on his face, he handed the unicycle back to Jay, and we all smiled. I thought nothing of the incident and assumed it was one of Jay's hobbies.

Months later I was eating lunch with Patty at our table beside the window. Jay came around the corner in a hurry. When I asked what the rush was, he said, “I’m going to walk a tightrope between those two buildings at the corner of Yonge and Bloor.”

I laughed because those buildings are at least thirty stories high. Jay said, "No seriously, come and watch, but I got to run", and he took off in a hurry. He sounded so serious I wondered if he could be telling the truth. Yonge and Bloor were a few blocks away and could be
easily seen from the roof of the warehouse, so I went up to have a look. Jay arrived on the roof of his building about the same time I arrived on mine. I stood there flabbergasted as he walked a tightrope. Years later I saw his picture in a magazine article and discovered his identity.

Jay Cochrane holds world records for the longest and highest tightrope walks in various countries. He walked the 650 feet between the Fallsview Casino and Hilton hotels on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls a number of times. Jay walked a wire above the Yangtze River in China's Qutang Gorge in 1995. In May 2002 he crossed Niagara Falls walking a tightrope with no safety net at the age of fifty-two. The walk took 12 minutes to make it across the 96-meter long steel cable.

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Laura came to visit me after we had split up. She had an ability to get to the heart of the matter quickly, that I admired. This visit exemplifies that talent perfectly. She looked a little rough, so I asked her if she wanted to go out somewhere to eat. She immediately responded with, “Can I just have the money instead?”

An old friend of Laura’s was in need of a place to stay and I invited her to stay with me. Alyssa and I got along fine and when her sister came to visit, she also moved in. Shortly after that two other girls moved in bringing the total to five.

My company asked me if I had the time to help them at another location. They had a high rise apartment building with new management that needed assistance. A girl I found attractive passed through the lobby to the elevator. She was almost five feet tall, with long black hair and looked oriental. Already living with five women, the last thing I needed was another one. A quick wave to the guy in the office brought him out immediately.

"Who’s that chick?" I asked while she waited for the elevator. He gave me her apartment number and I started doing a door to door
survey on water quality. She opened her door and I explained the need to check her water. She said I was welcome to do the work, but she was on her way out. "Maybe I better come back when you’re going to be here," I said. She told me her name was, Marilyn, and we agreed to meet later.

When she left, I took a passkey and searched her apartment. Before I became involved, I wanted to verify she was living alone and see what kind of person she was. Marilyn had several hundred records, so I decided to use that to get to her. She was home a while later when I returned to do my survey. The apartment next door to hers was empty and I went and listened to see if she had company. Satisfied she was alone, I knocked on her door. She answered and invited me in to check her water. I turned on the faucet in the kitchen, gave it a hard look and pronounced it satisfactory. With surprise, I noticed she was a record collector. It was beginning to look like fate, with some help from me, had put us together. My collection of several thousand was something she would have to see. She might even want to purchase some of my rare duplicates. She was taking the bait and it was time to back off and let her make a move. She took my phone number and I left confident of the outcome.

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There was a speaker company in the same alley as my warehouse. When the owners learned that I was running my own brewery, the requests for a bottle of wine came frequently. They were busted for drugs and an underage girl was found lying underneath one of them. Knowing he would get time for the girl, he took the drug rap also. He didn’t do too badly as he ended up serving two years for both offences. The owners and I remained friends. However, I thought it best to put a little distance between us and cut back on our visits. They surprised me one day by inviting me to the Chimney, a nearby bar on Younge Street. They had been hired to set up and maintain a sound system that week for John Hammond Jr.
Ellen McIlwaine, the slide guitarist, had given an enjoyable performance there recently, so I knew the place. It was relatively small and would be an excellent place to see John.

John Hammond Jr. is the son of John Henry Hammond II who was best known as a record producer and talent scout. He is the one who heard Billie Holiday perform in Harlem at the age of seventeen and arranged for her recording debut. He is also credited with discovering an eighteen-year-old gospel singer named Aretha Franklin. The man also heard Bob Dylan playing harmonica on a session for Carolyn Hester in 1961 and signed him to Columbia Records. He then kept him on the label despite the protests of executives who ridiculed Dylan. He produced Dylan's early recordings, "Blowin' in the Wind" and "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall."

With a father like his, it is little wonder that John Jr. took an interest in music himself. Although a fabulous singer and musician he has received only moderate commercial success. In the 1960's, John played The Gaslight Café in New York with both Eric Clapton and Jimi Hendrix in his band at the same time. His albums have been bolstered by the likes of John Lee Hooker, Roosevelt Sykes, Charlie Musselwhite, Robbie Robertson, and Duane Allman. John recorded with several members of "The Band" in 1965. He's is also the one who recommended them to Bob Dylan, with whom they undertook a never to be forgotten world tour. Yes, that's the tour Bob Dylan introduced his audiences to the electric guitar. There was no question about my accepting an invitation to see John Hammond Jr.

On September 21, 1974, John put on an outstanding show. Afterwards I was thrilled to find out that both sets had been taped off the board and I received a copy. The usual ego trip that many famous people have was missing and John spoke as if he had known you half his life.

Peppermint Patty had moved out, but we remained friends. When I explained what a huge fan Patty was and what a phone call would
mean to her, he asked, “What’s the number?” She thanked me later for the call and a memory she’d long cherish.

Not many people of John’s stature are as gracious. He was quite the opposite of someone like Wolfman Jack. Of all the music related people I’ve met in my life, I consider Wolfman to be the least noteworthy. He was an excellent disk jockey but not a singer or musician. I’ve received many autographs over the years and have never had anyone decline the compliment. As we stood talking with no one nearby, I asked the Wolfman if he would mind signing something for me. With an air of arrogance, he glanced around and answered without looking at me “I don’t want to start that, then everybody will want one”.

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One of the two parking lots in my care was leased by Paul who was a pilot. He introduced me to his new employee from India named Raahi. Paul said, “With his help, I can finally take some time off work”. All Raahi had to do was give out a timed ticket and collect payment when the customer returned to his car. Paul had a plane at the airport on Toronto Island. He invited me flying. Paul offered to instruct me in when we were away from the city. We took the ferry to the island airport and I was airborne for the first time. We were not in the air ten minutes when he had one wing of the plane pointed almost at the ground with the other up in the sky, and we were going around in circles like that over downtown Toronto. This was pushing it a little for my first ten minutes off the ground, but I didn’t want to complain. He was looking at the ground below us so intensely, that I knew something was wrong. I wasn’t sure how many more of these circles I wanted to fly, so I asked what the problem was. Without looking away from the ground, he said “Where the devil is Raahi?” We had been flying over the parking lot in tight circles while he was looking for his employee. I thought about killing him but didn’t think I could land the plane.
Marilyn eventually called and said she wanted to see the records. Alyssa had moved out, and her sister decided it was best for her to leave town for a while. The other girls were out when I had Marilyn over to visit. We had some wine and talked music. She was impressed with the record collection and the many rare things I played for her. When she began asking the wrong kind of questions, I grew suspicious. It was nothing to worry about as I lived and worked in the same place. She left with a few records I gave her, and we agreed to visit again. This girl was not going to get away. We had a couple more visits before our first problem arose. She was trying to figure out a way to steal my records, so I had to be careful how I handled the situation. It was akin to having a poisonous pet. You wanted the pet, but you had to be careful how you handled it.

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My interest in music was mostly fifty’s stuff. There was a singer I found that was different from anything that I normally listen to called Bob Dylan. Everybody laughed at his singing and said he sounded awful. Some critic in New York said he sounded like a dog with his foot caught in a fence. Mark, a friend of mine told me Bob Dylan, and The Rolling Thunder Revue were coming to Maple Leaf Gardens. He said that he’d be happy to let me have his second seat. Maple Leaf Gardens was an indoor arena in Toronto that seated 15,847. There was a seating arrangement for concerts that was like a private club. When it started, anyone that joined was given an assigned seat or seats. When an event was planned, each member was given an option to use their seat or let it be put up for sale to the public. If a member did not renew his membership each year, everybody under him moved up a seat closer to the stage. My friend, Mark, was almost the first to get a membership and in a short time, he had the two best seats in the house.

The problem was Marilyn. She seemed to know too much about crime, bike clubs, drugs, and why did she have two telephones? It seemed best not to leave one of the girls to watch my records while I
went to the concert. The perfect solution came to me. I asked Marilyn to watch the records. That threw a monkey wrench into her plans.

Bob Dylan & The Rolling Thunder Review put on a truly fabulous show. Thanks to Marilyn's perplexity, I was able to continue enjoying my record collection.
CHAPTER 11

My Thanks to the Funeral Homes

Because of the complexity of finding my door in the warehouse, people would often call to me from the street and I would answer from a window. As Marilyn's time spent with me increased, she began to answer the calls at my window. Girls would come to the window and call, "Stevie, Stevie", or whatever name I had given them. Marilyn would stick her head out the window and reply, "Stevie has his hands full right now".

Needless to say, all opportunities for love via the window soon dissipated. Marilyn moved in. Soon we both realized that all was not as it seemed. My first discovery was that she had lied about who she was. Her correct name was Marion. Her Chinese name was Mei Leng. Before I was able to complain, she realized I was not who I claimed to be either.

Mei Leng was born in Vancouver, British Columbia, of immigrant parents from mainland China. They worked round the clock to scrape by and were very strict and demanding. It's not surprising that Mei Leng eventually rebelled and was soon getting into trouble. After running away from home a couple times, her parents decided she was more than they could handle and gave her up to the Province to care for. How difficult it must have been for a fourteen-year-old to be locked up because her family didn't want her. Later she entered the U.S. illegally and joined a small carnival which traveled through California and southern Oregon. Eventually, she purchased a gambling concession known as a pan game. It would have been quite a
sight to see this young woman with a cigar hanging out of her mouth, challenging people to try their luck at a game of chance. She was arrested in Calexico, California, and sent to jail before being deported back to Canada. Mei Leng’s involvement with a street gang and motorcycle club helped guide her down the wrong path.

She had a natural talent for calligraphy and discovered that she was able to copy the handwriting of others accurately. Instead of copying their signature, Mei Leng would copy their style of writing and then she could write anything in their handwriting. She found that forgery proved a good income as well as importing and selling drugs. She recruited some girls for another business that was soon thriving. She would set the price when someone called and then send a girl over. Later the girl would deliver Mei Leng’s percentage of the money. That was why she had two phones. When we met, she had recently been released from prison. That time there were over 150 counts of fraud, forgery, false pretense and personation against her. Her lawyer plea bargained down the amount of time they had wanted her to do. I informed Mei Leng that she had to give up all illegal activities if she was going to be hanging around with me. Being busted because of my association with her was not in my plans.

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Going straight proved to be more difficult for her than I realized. She seemed to be a bigger criminal than I was. She let the girls go and got out of the forgery business. It was beginning to look like she had straightened out, but that proved to be a premature assessment. Mei Leng had a large, black leather purse and took it with her when she shopped. She would return from the store and empty the bags of cosmetics, food, or whatever she scored on the counter. Invariability she would pull something out of her purse like a black forest ham, a leg of lamb, expensive French perfume or whatever was readily available during her shopping trip. One time I watched her dump a large number of small, but expensive bottles of caviar on the counter. The caviar tasted delicious, but I could see it was time to have another
talk with her. If necessary, I was prepared to live out my remaining years in freedom without caviar. We had our talk, but I came away feeling like a parole officer trying to lecture a career criminal. Shortly after that, I received a phone call from a sheepish sounding Mei Leng. She informed me she might be a little late getting home because she was in custody. It seems that she was shopping for something and had forgotten to pay for it.

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A guy with a local bike club had recently been released from prison. He and Mei Leng had a dispute, and he intended to do serious damage or worse to her when she was located. A short while later, some people from Mei Leng’s past were making inquiries around the warehouse complex. As much as I regretted it, I realized we would have to leave town if we were going to remain together.

The records were placed in storage. I called Bob, a fellow record collector, to see if we could stay at his home. We needed time to figure out our next move. Bob, and his wife, Helen, are some of the best friends we’ve ever had. They helped me at a desperate time and asked nothing in return. We moved in temporarily and stayed there for several months. I instructed Mei Leng not to leave the house till I could get her safely out of Toronto. It was safer for me to leave the house because none of her former friends knew what I looked like.

Bob and I talked about music, and Mei Leng cooked the family meals almost daily. It was a small house, but we never felt unwelcome. During our stay with Bob, we were told by a friend that John Schenk, the crime reporter for a local newspaper wanted to contact us. Most reporters I’ve met were not trustworthy, but John proved to be a decent guy. He did a story on me and placed it on the front page of his section. He changed my name to Lenny in the story and wrote what it was like to be a fugitive. He changed a few necessary details but kept the story accurate.
Our friends at Records on Wheels said they were interested in opening a store for Mei Leng and me to manage. We worked out a deal that would give us ten percent ownership in a year. We located a store in Ottawa. The building was secured and we prepared to leave for Canada’s capital city.

After living with Bob and Helen for months, and contributing nothing for food or rent, they were actually sad to see us go. We could not be more thankful for their friendship and knew we would miss them.

We arrived in Ottawa during the middle of winter. The snow banks on the side of the streets were high. Metal rods were sticking out of the snow banks along the curb. The other end was fastened to fire hydrants to mark their positions so the snow plow wouldn’t hit them by accident. We thanked our ride, and took up residency in the empty store and began work immediately. Lumber was delivered and I built record racks. Record shipments were priced, categorized and put in their place. We were ready to open in thirty days. Since I never could do things like everybody else, this was not going to be an exception.

The day before our grand opening, I hatched a plan. A resident of Ottawa volunteered to help when I shared my idea with him. He was instructed to visit the funeral homes and ask for all the leftover flowers. Some flowers go to the grave site, but most are discarded after the funeral. The store was soon filled with big beautiful flower displays. My former forger then went to work sighing cards and ribbons for the flower baskets. When Mei Leng was finished, it appeared as if we had received something from everyone in the music business. We had flowers from Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, Joni Mitchell, Mick Jagger, Paul McCartney, Elton John, etc. The next day the store was packed with people. It was hard to keep from laughing out loud. The customers looked at the flowers and the signatures on the cards with amazement while I tried to keep a straight face.

Because we were to become part owners, we worked long hours and received little pay. For the first few months, we slept on the floor
of the basement, which Mei Leng said was creepy. For the most part, we could not leave the store. One of us always had to be there. On a rare occasion, one of us might leave for a short time. The store was closed on Sunday but so was everything else. After a few months, we rented an inexpensive apartment but had little left over after buying food. We had agreed to use wisdom in handing our limited funds.

So naturally, I was perplexed when Mei Leng returned from a shopping trip with a case of makeup. Her logic had never failed to amaze me and this was destined to become an unforgettable moment. She had been shopping with her friend, Patrice when they found a wonderful sale on amazing eye shadow palettes. Patrice had also been asked to limit her spending by her boyfriend.

When I asked Mei Leng why she spent the money on something we could do without, she said, “Patrice bought this for me, wasn’t that nice of her?” I said, “Well yes, that was nice”. Just before Mei Leng turned to walk away, she added, “So I bought one for her”.

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We eventually hired Brian, a college student to help in the store. Brian was sure that People didn’t listen to what was said half the time. He demonstrated his point best one day on a customer. She was a woman that was… well, she had…mmm. Let me put it like this. If she had been a chicken, there would have been a tremendous amount of white meat. With his usual air of self-confidence, Brian began to ring up her purchases. When the transaction was completed, Brian handed her the bag of records.

“Thank you very large,” he said as he smiled at her. Mei Leng was trying to keep from laughing out loud. The lady smiled, said, “Thank you” and left the store without a clue. I was concerned Brian might cause a disturbance in the store, but he was right, no one listened.

Brian had a show at CKCU radio and was a talented host. He said my extensive record collection and knowledge of music made me an
ideal candidate for an oldies program. The show could be done on Sunday when the store was closed. When the station manager came to the store and reiterated Brian’s claim, I agreed and began work. We would recreate a 1950’s style radio show. Mei Leng and I spent the next three months creating contests, commercials, and jingles. The Steve Wilson Show was soon on the air.
CHAPTER 12

But, I Don’t Look Half Chinese

Our business partners back in Toronto called and said Frank Zappa agreed to do an autograph session in our store. We placed an announcement in the newspaper and waited for the big day. When the day came, there were people lined up to meet Frank. It was a fun-filled day that ended too soon.

One of our regular customers came into the store with a friend he wanted to introduce. It was Jim Unger. Jim draws the syndicated Herman comic strip. He has put many smiles on people’s faces with his off the wall sense of humor.

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There was a stretch of Yonge Street considered the downtown area that had an abundance of strip clubs and massage parlors. They were fronts for prostitution and the usual things that went with it. In the summer of 1977, Emanuel Jaques and his brother Luciano were often seen at Yonge and Dundas streets. They shined shoes to help support their immigrant parents and five siblings. On July 28, twelve-year-old Emanuel was sexually assaulted and murdered by three homosexuals. It was an extremely sickening affair, so I will skip any more details. The outcry was such that it forced the people that ran Toronto to clean up the area.

It was a time when punk bands were all the rage. That type of music was selling like crazy, and we carried a large selection of it. Usually, our supplies arrived by courier, but our partners would also
drive over 200 miles from Toronto to Ottawa every two or three weeks to deliver records. If they had a hot one, they would ship it so we could get it sooner. I opened a shipment to find a stack of records that some local punk band had recorded called, “Shoe Shine Boy.” I was enraged and threw the whole stack of records in the garbage. Who would sell this kind of trash to make money? Can you imagine what the family of that young boy was going through? Apparently, I was not the only one in need of better morals.

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There was a delicatessen across the street from the record store that was owned and operated by Jerry & Linda, with the help of Jerry’s brother, Robert. Jerry said the delicatessen was not what they had anticipated and was being sold. The next thing they wanted to try was a 1950’s style night club. We helped all we could and suggested some singers. The club opened successfully.

My friends told me later that they had acquired a gig with Freddie Cannon. We showed up to meet him. When we arrived, Freddie was doing an interview and we were told to join them. There was an eating area with some booths in the front of the building. Mei Leng and I went there and sit directly behind them in the next booth so we could listen to the interview. The conversation was all the usual stuff till he was asked what his first record was. When Freddie told them, I interrupted and said, “Well that actually was not your first record”.

He said, “Oh, what was it”?

“I believe you played guitar on this record” I replied, and handed it to him. He looked a little surprised and said, “Why don’t you come over here and sit”. He got up and made room in the booth beside him. He later came to our house for a visit. Freddie was highly skilled with a yo-yo and gave us some demonstrations. I still have the yo-yo he gave me.

It was about this time we had some differences with our business partners. They claimed we were not keeping our end of the deal. We
had spent most of a year working long hour, six days a week. On a rare occasion, one of us might leave the store for a brief time, but not both of us at once. We had paid our dues and thought it was time to receive our ten percent we were promised. We had purchased a few records from the store and I had stolen a few but not many. There was little in the store that interested me. We never touched the money, so I’m not sure what that was all about. My life had been spent ripping off lots of people, but this time, I was on the other end of it. I supposed I should have been furious after all we had sacrificed to get the store up and running. It was frustrating, but I was thankful the job enabled me to leave Toronto at that time. When we realized that deal was not working out, we decided soon afterward to move to Mei Leng’s hometown, Vancouver, British Columbia.

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The record collection had grown large over the years. Most of my money had been spent buying rare items from auctions, etc. Moving that much weight was going to be expensive. A search began for a way to accomplish this without filing bankruptcy. Derik and I met soon after his release from prison. He lived in Ottawa, but it became necessary to move to Vancouver Island because of his job. He worked for the government, and they were going to pay for the move. We had a discussion and decided to consolidate our moves. He would tell the movers he needed to drop some of the stuff off in Vancouver. The movers were not about to complain as they were paid by the pound. Other than a massive record collection, we owned very little.

We would store our belonging with Mei Leng’s mom till we found jobs and a place to live. The moving van loaded our stuff, and we went to Toronto to say goodbye to friends. Our stuff arrived in Vancouver shortly after we did. Derik called Mei Leng’s mom to see if everything went as planned. When he asked for me, her always suspicious mom said, “Why you want him, he owe you money?”

No one in Mei Leng’s family had ever married outside the Chinese race. Since I was not Chinese, there were mixed feelings
about her being with me. It was suggested that I claim to be half Chinese, but I didn’t think that was believable. Her mom, who took the English name of Barbara, spoke little English. I was naturally curious about Mei Leng’s childhood. She shared her memories with me in her best broken English. At one point, while she was reflecting on all this, she leaned in a little closer and said, “This one lots of trouble, you don’t know, lots of trouble!” I didn’t know at the time if she was trying to run me off because I was not Chinese or if it was an honest warning. Over the years I have come to believe the latter.

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We began job hunting and I found employment with a lighting company that also sold electric motors. They had the biggest mess in their back room that you could imagine. The place looked like a fulfillment of end time prophecy. Some stuff must have been piled up there for years. Everybody has some natural talents and abilities. Mine are organization and neatness. When I claimed I would clean and organize the place, I was met with open laughter and ridicule. No one was laughing a few weeks later when it was finished. My employer was pleased with my accomplishments and wanted me to be part of his plans for the future.

Mei Leng had exaggerated her resume and landed a job as a merchandise secretary, aka assistant buyer, at the head office for a department store chain. She came home the second day almost in tears and said she was going to quit. The job was going to be much too difficult with her lack of experience. A friend and I reasoned with her and said, “Have they complained or said they would let you go?”

She said no one had said anything negative to her. We encouraged her to stay and learn the job. “What is the worst they can do, fire you? You have nothing to lose.”

It turned out to be like many (but not all) jobs I have seen. All the high levels of educations, special training and experience usually required were unnecessary. She applied herself and soon became one
of their best. She received a promotion and raise and later when she said she was leaving the job; they offered her considerably more.

We found an apartment downtown that allowed us to walk to anything we needed, making a car unnecessary. We were directly on the bus route, a few blocks from Stanley Park, close to the beach, and grocery stores. Stanley Park is a one thousand acre peninsula that borders downtown Vancouver. It has a rideable miniature railway, three large beaches, a small zoo, and the Vancouver Aquarium. There is a forest with many old monster size trees and all kinds of wildlife. A few miles offshore is Vancouver Island. It is usually on the lists of top ten places in the world to live. There is not much difference between Vancouver and the island. Vancouver is one of the most beautiful cities in the world.
CHAPTER 13

Serious Implications

My friend, Mark, from Toronto, who had taken me to see Bob Dylan, also collected audiotapes of concerts. Mark had acquired a concert I wanted to hear and mailed it to me. The musician stopped in midconcert and announced that he had become a Christian. My first thought was one of frustration thinking this source of music was about to dry up. As I listened further, he told about things that took place when Jesus walked the earth. He said Jesus caused controversy. Some said, “he has a devil (demon possessed) and is mad (insane) why hear ye him?” Others said, “These are not the words of him that hath a devil.”

It sounded like some people could understand him while others could not. Some things Jesus said had serious implications. During my childhood, I had learned about some of the things Jesus taught. There was a place called heaven which God has prepared for people who were saved and loved Him. He had wonderful plans for this group of people. There was another place called hell for those who rejected Him. This prison was a place of eternal sorrow and pain. My future was something that I didn’t normally think about because I never had anything to look forward to.

After suffering so much in this life, I didn't want to spend eternity in a place of torment with no chance of escape! My future and the things Jesus taught were things I started to think about. Would I understand what Jesus taught, now that I was an adult? Would any of this make sense to me if I read a Bible? Was he a madman? Why
would anybody teach those things if they were untrue? There were so many questions?

The next time I had an opportunity to examine a Bible, I would see for myself what Jesus had to say. That didn’t seem likely to happen anytime soon. There were no Bibles in my home and I'm pretty sure none of my friends owned a Bible. When it came time to choose between buying alcohol, drugs or a Bible, well, you got the idea. However, you do not think those kinds of thoughts without God acting upon them.

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We were still living in downtown Vancouver and had gone to the Pacific Centre Mall, which was a short walk from home. It was an indoor mall where Mei Leng had wanted to do some shopping and I had reluctantly agreed to tag along. We were walking along a long corridor with stores on both sides. She entered a store and I found a place to sit and wait in the hallway. When she returned, we walked a little farther to another store, and I'd find another seat.

I sat down again to wait and saw a table where two men were giving away books. The men were Gideons (See Appendix) and they were giving away new testaments. Once again I felt that unseen presence. This time The Holy Spirit said, "The answers to the questions and problems in your life can be found in that book." There were many questions I had about Jesus and the things he taught. The problems in my life seemed insurmountable. If there were answers to my problems, I sure would like to know what they were. This book was just what I wanted and the price was right. I'd accept a free Bible, but the thought of purchasing one never once crossed my mind.

I was about to approach the table and receive my free Bible when I looked around and realized where I was. This was a public place, and I was surrounded by people. I felt ashamed to let someone see me with a Bible. The Holy Spirit has to be the gentlest being in existence. He will never force his will upon anyone, great or small. However, he can
be persuasive. Although he kept gently telling me I needed to get that Bible, there were too many people around. Even though I wanted it, I keep walking past the table. The Holy Spirit is far more persistent than any law enforcement agency. I'm thankful God doesn't give up easily. He continued tugging on me to get a Bible. Those gentlemen and their tempting offer were some distance behind me when I could resist the Holy Spirit no longer. Turning to Mei Leng, I asked her if she would mind going back to that table for one of those free books.

There are no words to describe the look she had on her face. That look grew more perplexed when I said, “Put the book in your purse and do not come back and hand it to me. I’ll get it when we get home”.

God must have been involved because it was probably the only time in her life that she did exactly what I asked her to do. Later, when we arrived home, she brought the Testament to me. Looking me in the face, she said, "Listen, don't you go getting mixed up in something weird!"

Many cults populated the larger cities in those days. They could be found on the sidewalks attempting to acquire new recruits. There were L. Ron Hubbard’s bunch called the “Church of Scientology”. Additionally, there was, “The Process” who dressed up entirely in black like Zorro without the mask. In contrast, the “Hare Krishna” group were more colorful wrapped in orange bedsheets while passing out peanuts. Mei Leng felt her concerns were well founded and did not want me hanging out with one of these groups. All things considered, I assured her there was nothing to worry about. In short, I was just curious about some things in that book.

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My custom was to read each night before sleep. Beside my bed was a stack of books that was pushed aside so I could start reading my New Testament. The message of that Testament was not mysterious at all, and I soon learned about Jesus and what he taught. He didn’t sound
like a madman to me. In essence, the things he said were easy to understand and made perfect sense.

Every country has laws, and the breaking of those laws are referred to as crimes. God has laws that he meant for people to live by and the breaking of those laws are referred to as sins. The Bible states plainly in a few places what those sins are. There is a list of some of them in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (KJV) “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” God is a fair and impartial judge. He cannot and will not show favor. The problem is that the penalty for breaking these laws is death. Because of his love, God made a plan to save mankind from the penalty of their sins. The condemned person could live if someone else paid the penalty for their sins and died in their place.

To summarize, that is what Jesus did. He came to earth in human flesh to pay the penalty for our sins. It is easy to understand John 3:16. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” A day of judgment is coming, but there is forgiveness for anyone who will confess their sins and trust in Christ. A Christian is a person who not only keeps the laws of the country he lives in but also keeps God's laws. God's laws are not that hard to keep because he will tell you if you’re about to do something wrong. He may not stop you, but you will know it's wrong. How many times have you started to do wrong and something inside of you was saying "Do not do that.” He wants to help us, but it's our decision to listen or not. If you ignore that small voice of the Holy Spirit inside of you long enough, you may come to a place where you do not hear it anymore.

Obviously I had broken many of God’s laws. The work of the Holy Spirit is to call people to seek God's forgiveness. Therefore, he helped me understand that God loved me and I began to feel guilty for
the many evil things I had done. His forgiveness seems too good to be true, and I knew I would have to get my life straightened out with God someday. When I was younger and attended pastor Gray’s church, there was a painting on the wall behind the platform that read “Where will you spend eternity?” During my life, I had at various time encountered Christians. The ones I met always seemed negative with statements like “We do not do that, or we do not believe in participating in that, and our church says that’s wrong. Apparently, I must have encountered a lot of fringe cases of Christianity. Eventually, I began to think that I could answer that question pastor Gray had painted on the wall. It would be in a room full of Christians waiting for one of them to do or say something exciting. It seemed that being a Christian meant I would have to give up everything and spend the rest of my days being bored to death. Later, I learned how inaccurate that was. Eventually, I concluded that the best way to handle this was to wait till just before I died to get right with God. A major problem with that plan was the inability to know when I was going to die. One bullet in the head would completely ruin that plan. While my thoughts were “the later, the better”, God’s plan was “the sooner, the better”. The Holy Spirit was calling me to surrender my life to Him.
CHAPTER 14

Psychiatric Treatment?

Concentrating on my work became more difficult each day as I began to think about the future. The Holy Spirit was telling me that I needed forgiveness today, for I had no idea what tomorrow would bring. His presence was so strong my eyes would fill with tears. I would hurry into the washroom to dry my eyes before anyone could see me. A little while on the job and I’d be back in the washroom again. He was telling me that he loved me and could help me with my life. He could also bring me peace, something I knew so little about. I do not think anybody had ever cared much about me, and there was no question about it, only God could help with the mess I had made of my life. I felt so condemned for the things I had done. He said he loved me, would forgive me, and help me with my life. The more I thought about it, the better it sounded.

One night I felt I could resist God's love no longer. On July 28, 1980, I knelt at an old chair in our living room and prayed a short prayer. I told God I was sorry for the things I had done. Although I could not change those things, I could change what I would do from now on. Many people had been harmed by my actions, and I had come to regretted it very much. If He would forgive me like I read in the Bible, I would start doing things right. I told him I wanted to be a Christian and to start living like he wanted me to. Those words came from my heart, and I meant what I had said.

Admittedly, I did not feel like I had been struck by lightning. However something was different. From that day on I have never been
the same person. What the Bible said in 2 Corinthians 5:17 is true: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.” I got up from my prayer and went to bed.

The first thing I learned the next morning as a new Christian was what Peter talked about in 1 Peter 4:12 "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." Changing sides in this war meant the one I used to serve had become my bitter enemy. Truth is, he always was my enemy. Our mail was delivered early in the morning because we lived in a downtown area. Checking my mail the next morning, I discovered a man I had been doing business with had cheated me out of four hundred dollars. To say I became angry is an understatement because I wanted to choke him to death, or at least beat him senseless.

The Holy Spirit continued speaking to me saying, “You must do things differently now if you want to serve me. I have forgiven you for much, shouldn't you forgive him?” God was right and I knew it, but I still wanted to hurt the man as I began thinking about what it meant to be a Christian. This was still on my mind and stayed there when I went to work that day. There was such a battle raging inside of me.

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Paychecks were distributed prior to lunch break and I headed to the bank intending to cash mine. However, when I was the next one in line, the Holy Spirit asked me whose name was on the check. That paycheck was still in my hand when I turned around and left the bank. The Bible says in Revelation 21:8 “…all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” God was reminding me how my life was built upon lies. They had become the basis of my existence. It would be difficult to live the life of a fugitive without lies. It seemed every moment after returning to work brought another lie to my mind. Had I completely forgotten how to be truthful about anything? As if I wasn’t feeling sufficiently guilt enough, the Holy Spirit reminded me about my tendency to steal.
Among many other dishonest deeds, I brought my letters from home and used the company’s postal meter to mail them. The convicted I felt was so strong that I had to start setting some of this stuff straight immediately. There were tears in my eyes when I went to my supervisor’s office for a chat. I explained my Christianity and a new need for honesty. An apology was added to the fact that the stolen postage would have to be returned to the company. That was when I begin to observe that any move on my part to give up sin was met by the enemy of my soul with an attempt to sidetrack my efforts. Had I been caught stealing, there was no doubt that I would have been released from the company. However, now that I wanted to be honest, the devil turned things upside down. My supervisor said, “Oh well, we all steal.” His desire was to sweep the matter under the carpet and forget it.

There was some food for thought. If I am found stealing, I am told it is wrong and punished for it. If I attempt to stop stealing and be honest, then the ones that should punish me are now willing to look the other way. If a person will look and listen, it will not only become obvious when God is involved in something, you can also tell when the enemy is trying to derail things.

Thanks to the Holy Spirit’s love and gentle prodding, it became self-evident, that I would be unable to serve God without major changes in my lifestyle. As these thoughts swirled in my mind, I realized what was necessary. It would not be an easy undertaking, but I knew God would be with me every step of the way because of what he said. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Hebrews 13:5). My start would be to surrender myself to the police and face the punishment for my past crimes. Then I would began living my life based on a different set of principles. It would be worth the price I had to pay. How could I compare life in prison to eternity in hell? My life on earth would end one day, but eternity in hell and its torment has no end.

At approximately noon the next day, I walked off the job, telling my employer I had to get my life straightened out with God. When I
went home to tell Mei Leng my plans and say goodbye, she asked me what I was doing. It seemed likely I would die in prison, but I had become more concerned about God then any law enforcement agency. She did everything in her power to talk me out of surrendering to the police. When the fruitlessness of her efforts became apparent, I said I would like stop at a church on my way to surrender. The pastor of a Pentecostal church talked to me a while, then said he could baptize me before I left. After I was baptized, the pastor gave me a Bible and offered to take me to the police station. His offer was accepted and we set off to the police station.

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My friends were bikers, rapists, murderers, thieves, drug dealers, prostitutes, forgers, burglars, etc. and some of them had planned their assorted ventures in my presence. Doing anything to keep from being caught was a normal thought process. Having jumped bond and eluded capture for ten years after encountering the police more than a dozen times made me a successful fugitive. I possessed a full set of identification, suitable employment, a woman I had lived with for a few years with plans to marry. Now, two days after I had accepted Jesus as my savior and been born again, I find myself looking for a police station. I was about to do the most unbelievable thing I have ever done, that I might please God.

When we located the R.C.M.P. in Burnaby, British Colombia, the pastor and Mei Leng walked me inside and to the counter. The Mountie on duty asked if he could help us with anything.

“Yes, I am here to surrender. My real name is Ken Burton, and I am a fugitive. Since becoming a Christian, I have decided to face the charges against me. I need to return to Michigan and serve a 25 to 40 years prison sentence I've been running from. There is also a Federal Warrant for Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution I need to answer to. Here is all my false identification. I have been living in your country illegally for ten years and have eluded capture many times. I will furnish you with a list of all the names I have used and all the jobs I
have worked at. In fact, I will tell you anything you want to know about me, here I am.”

After listening to my story, that Mountie only wanted to know one thing. He looked me in the face and asked, "Mr. Burton, have you ever had any psychiatric treatment?"

To this day, I find it amusing that the officer was reluctant to take me into custody. After some more conversation, and seemingly against his better judgment, he agreed to lock me up. The officer acted as if he were doing me a favor when it became apparent I was not leaving. He locked me up and they began checking my story. When they concluded I had been honest with them for the first time in my life, they were elated to have me.

The next morning they brought people to my cell to see me. “There he is. He walked in here last night on his own. Said he had become a Christian and needed to start pleasing God with his life now.”

They were all walking around grinning and shaking their heads. A man from the Department of Immigration came early in the day to interview me. I answered all of his questions truthfully. I think he was a little surprised at my willingness to cooperate. He left after telling me I would be called for a hearing before a judge who dealt with immigration issues.

Shortly after that I found myself before that judge who questioned me to establish that I had entered Canada illegally. It was not a difficult feat for him as I simply answered all his questions truthfully. Somewhere along the line, they had decided there were no crimes committed on Canadian soil that I was to be prosecuted for. The judge ruled that I was to be deported and that would be the end of Canada’s interest in the matter. His last statement was, “You are the most honest person I have ever had in this court.”

Wait a minute, what just happened? A judge just told me I was being deported. After having been in Canada illegally for ten years and
I was not going to be prosecuted for anything. They could have kept me forever. The judge just called me an honest man. That was a new experience. Now I began to see what kind of power God can exercise in the life of his servants. My duty was to please him with my life and let him fight my battles for me. I was still facing twenty five to forty years in prison plus the federal time, but what would God do next?

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Arrangements were made for my immediate transfer to isolation at their downtown facility. When it came time to be placed in the cell, I asked if I might have my Bible. The officer in charge said, “No”. Another officer said, “Oh let him have it.” I believe he had heard about my surrendering after I became a Christian and was somewhat sympathetic. The first officer insisted “He’s not allowed to have it”.

Who would have thought they’d have wanted to deprive me of a Bible. Just look at the effect it was having on me in the few days I had been reading it. After observing the effect God’s word was having on me, a wise law enforcement agency should have placed Bibles in every cell they had. In a downcast state, without a Bible, I was led to my cell. A short time passed and that “somewhat sympathetic officer” opened the cell door with my Bible in his hand. “Here,” he said with an outstretched hand. I said thanks as we seemed to have traded understanding smiles. There was such a desire in me to learn more about God, and from all appearances, I was going to have the time to do so.

The empty cell they placed me in was made to hold about a dozen prisoners. The Canadian authorities used this cell to isolate illegal immigrants from their own population. It was a timely opportunity for me to pray and read my Bible without distraction. There was a need to learn what my enemy could and could not do to me. There was such a battle taking place around me as I stood wondering if I had weapons and how to use them. The Holy Spirit was with me in a way so powerful that I could feel his presence. He was there to guide me every moment as I began to learn how to stand against the devil.
CHAPTER 15

HUGE Bolt of Lightning

The devil's most formidable weapon is the lie. Through His lies, he caused me to question my salvation. How did I know I was saved? Why would God care anything about someone like me? Why should God want to help me in my current situation? The devil lies in the hopes that he can get people to doubt God and his word. I read in the book of Genesis where the devil (through the serpent) tried this with Eve. First, he asked her, “Did God say, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” She told him, “God said she would die if she ate from one tree”. The devil called God a liar, and said, "Ye shall not surely die". Now, he was lying to me and trying to call God a liar again. If I had known God’s word better, I could have answered him and sent him away. It is important to study the Bible, so we know where we stand with God and when we are being lied to by our enemy.

Because of the devil’s lies, I was beginning to have my doubts and wondering if God was big enough to take care of me in a place like this jail. I Remember lying on the floor and weeping before God in need of some reassurance. At that time I found something out about God. If you serve him and are in need of help, you will receive it. “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Hebrews 13:6.” Because that day was a Holiday in Canada, a special pass from the department of immigration was required to visit someone in isolation where I was. The office that issued these passes was closed for the holiday. Mei Leng had wanted to visit me and was told it was not possible without that pass.
The pastor, who had baptized me, contacted Mei Leng that day to inquire about my well-being. They decided to try again and visit without the pass. That pastor was not a new Christian and knew God could not be hindered by the lack of a pass. Looking back, I can see that God wanted them to visit on that holiday because there were no other prisoners or visitors in the visiting area that day. He wanted us to have privacy because of what he had planned. My door opened and a guard called me out of the cell informing I had visitors. Wiping away tears, I went with the guard and tried to forget the spiritual battle raging in me. We came to a door which the guard unlocked and sent me through alone. He locked the door behind me, leaving me there to visit without supervision.

The room was divided by a heavy wall with the top half made of glass so thick it made people on the other side look green. I climbed on a stool and picked up the telephone they had set up for an intercom. The pastor had brought his wife and their new baby as well as Mei Leng. It seemed almost impossible to talk to anyone through my tears from the battle I was in. Finally, the pastor reached for the phone from Mei Leng and started to pray.

As he prayed, I felt my strength leave my body, and I started sliding off the stool I was sitting on, toward the floor. About halfway to the floor it seemed like I was struck with a HUGE bolt of lightning. It hit my chest low on the right side and exploded inside me. I began to speak in a language I had never spoken before. It seemed like I was before God's throne. I leaped to my feet and threw my hands into the air and began praising God with a loud voice. His presence was so strong! I wanted to stay there with him forever! I was so happy I was leaping up and down praising God. I now knew he was big enough to meet all my needs. I also now knew he was more than able to take care of me and anything I would ever face. God’s presence was so strong in that jail cell.

There came a time when I remembered that I was still on earth and had friends looking at me from the other side of the thick glass. I
picked up the phone and told them they could go now and that everything was going to be alright. I wasn't trying to be rude; it's just that I wanted to remain in God’s presence. The pastor understood what had happened and tried to tell Mei Leng she could read about it. In the Bible, John said that Jesus would, “…baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire”. Matthew 3:11. In Acts 1:8 the Bible says, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you”. I had received the gift of the Holy Spirit and my life had been forever changed. Mei Leng lacked knowledge about the things of God. She went home not believing or understanding what the pastor had tried to explain to her.

The next day Mei Leng called the jail and reported all that she had seen. She cared about me and thought I might be under too much stress. Later that day, my cell opened and a man dressed in white entered with two of his friends. He said “I've been talking to Mei Leng and I'm here to help you. As a matter of fact, I have brought you something. He lifted his hand a little, so I could see he was holding some pills. You have been under a lot of stress, and these pills will help you to mellow out a little.”

Did I not already say that any move on my part to give up sin was met by the enemy of my soul with an attempt hinder me? Remember that part about look and listen and you will be able to tell when the enemy is involved. Well, here he was hard at work once again. I could hardly believe my ears. I have had a problem with drugs most of my life. It was easier to commit a crime if you were full of drugs. My conscience didn’t bother me as much when I used drugs. I had been living on them almost as long as I could remember. The reason the police had chased me for the last ten years was because I was selling drugs. Now for the first time I was full of the spirit of God and had no desire for drugs and what do I hear? This unknowing servant of the devil is standing in front of me with his hand outstretched offering me free drugs. I told him I would never need drugs again because I had found something better. Can you believe he acted slightly offended because I refused his offer? He still would not give up his efforts to
push drugs on me. He added that I could call the guard anytime and he would return with the drugs if I changed my mind. In retrospect, I think he was a better drug pusher than I ever was.

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Eventually, the Canadian authorities delivered me to the U.S. border at Blaine, Washington. The U.S. authorities escorted me to the Whatcom County jail in Bellingham, Washington. The jail is a maximum-security facility that holds about 250 prisoners. My new accommodations consisted of one large room with a row of cells across the side.

As a new Christian, there were many things I needed to learn. My understanding of the enemies’ tactics and weapons was about to increase. As the heavy steel door slammed noisily behind me, I was approached by the welcoming committee. It seems like prisoners always wanted to know one thing, "What are you in here for?"

Well, I started telling my story and did not get far before being interrupted.

"HEY! Come over here. You gotta hear this one!" The committee grew in size and I was asked to start over again. This time I got a little further into my story before I heard, "Wait a minute. Are you trying to tell us, you had a job and a good set of false identification? You were living with a woman and planning to be married? The police hadn't caught you in ten years? And you surrendered to serve a 25 to 40 years prison sentence and all the other charges they now have?"

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To me, it seemed like the most natural thing in the world to do. “Yes,” I answered, “I have become a Christian and now I want to please God with my life”.

Another prisoner looked me in the face with utter disbelief and said, "You ain't got a lick of sense in your head”. You will never get
out of prison alive!" Looking back on this incident, I am able to see clearly now that God had not sent these prisoners to encourage me.

By the next morning, I needed to think and spend some more time in prayer. I decided to stay in my cell, instead of joining the other prisoners in the large room for the day. A life in prison was nothing to look forward to, and I must confess to some self-pity and discouragement. As I began to focus more on my situation than on God's desire, intent and ability to work in my life, discouragement tightened its grip. An inability to meet a need is not one of God's traits. Since having committed myself to him, I was rapidly learning he would always meet my needs, even without my asking. God knew all about the spiritual battle I was fighting. As I paced the small cell becoming more discouraged by the minute, help was already on the way.
CHAPTER 16

My Kind of Cop

A guard came to the door and shouted, Kenneth Burton!"

"I'm here," I answered.

I was brought out of my cell and taken to a counter that was used to take fingerprints. A woman in uniform was waiting for me. She introduced herself. "I'm Sharon Wagner from the Sheriff's Department and I'm here to take your fingerprints. We want to be sure that you are who you say you are." (Why on earth would anybody want to impersonate me?) When Sharon saw I was downcast, she began to make some small talk. She soon asked me if I had accepted Jesus as my savior.

Yes, you are reading this right!! I'm in jail with a deputy sheriff taking my fingerprints when she wants to know if I'm a Christian. I could not believe my ears. I was so thrilled to see another Christian I could not contain myself.

“Yes!” I said, “I am a Christian and that’s the reason I'm in this place”.

I started telling her my whole life’s story. She heard about the way I used to live and how much trouble I had gotten into. I went on to explain how God had forgiven me, and how I had surrendered myself to please him. I told her about being baptized in the Holy Spirit and how they wanted to give me free drugs. She may not have needed me
to reveal my discouragement as it was not well hidden. God had His hand in my life. I knew He would always help me.

When I finished speaking, she looked me in the face and said, "You listen to me, Ken. I was once a prisoner on the other side of this building where they keep the women. Look at what He has done in my life. Today I work for the Sheriff's Department. He will never leave you or turn his back on you. It is written in God's word, "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion" (Philippians 1:6 NIV). There is no need for you to be discouraged. Let’s pray”.

Yes, the deputy sheriff said, “Let’s pray”. We bowed our heads, and Sharon prayed for me. From that day until this one, there has always been a special place in my heart for Sharon. It would not be possible to put into words how meaningful her prayers and words of encouragement were to me. It was a crucial time in my life when I desperately needed what she brought. Her positive attitude and prayers had a profound impact on me at that time.

God always knows what is needed in the life of his servants. One can never predict the manner in which He will provide what’s needed. There seem to be no limitations to what He can bring to pass? Who else would or could send a cop to encourage and pray for a convict? When I think back on all this, I shake my head and say “God is amazing” Needless to point out, I reentered my cell having been encouraged immensely. In a very short time, I believe it became obvious to all that someone was laboring, behind the scenes, on my behalf.

A few days later I was in my cell with five or six other inmates, answering questions about the Bible. They had started reading them and wanted to know what I found in there. Sharon returned with some Christian literature and more encouragement. That had to be somewhat startling to the other inmates as the deputies are not widely known for their love of the prisoners.

Bellingham authorities contacted their counterparts in Flint, Michigan. They were informed that Kenneth L. Burton was in custody
in the state of Washington. It was their understanding there were outstanding warrants and they needed to know how Flint wanted to proceed. The normal plan would be for Flint to begin extradition proceedings. The response took a short while because there was some difficulty finding the warrants.

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The city of Flint was a saturated crime ghetto with an insufficient tax base. That translates into a lack of funds for necessities regarding law enforcement. Extraditing a prisoner from Bellingham, Washington to Flint, Michigan would have cost more than a few dollars from an already underfunded city. It would have required expensive short notice airfare for two. An agent’s food and hotel bill plus his wages which would include a large number of overtime hours. I had not been a problem to them for many years. Most of those who had originally dealt with me were gone. Maybe someone thought squandering their limited funds to return me to Flint would not be an act of wisdom. After all, I had not been caught but had surrendered. These all sounded like almost good enough reasons to explain what they did next. They stated that I should be released to return to Flint on my own. I was trying to get there on my own, to begin with, but it still seemed extremely difficult to believe that they would issue those instructions. There had to be more to the story than that.

I was brought out of my cell to meet with Sharon and she was happy to give me the good news. She had spent a considerable amount of time in prayer over this matter. Sharon and I were smiling and rejoicing because we knew something that the world could not see or understand. God was working on my behalf. She and I were thankful for what God was doing, but there were others who were not so happy about it. One of the head honchos at that jail was watching Sharon and I and said, “This ain’t over yet, Burton”. He clearly didn’t like what he was seeing. Never the less they had no choice but to release me with instructions to return to Flint on my own.
Years later I received a letter from Sharon explaining what had taken place. She said we never had much time to talk the day you were released and I do not think I ever told you this. In her letter, she said, “God opened them jail bars for you. It was such a set-up by God”. She went on to explain that she was the fingerprint technician who classified prints for the state of Washington and the FBI. She had absolutely no authority regarding prisoner status. She arrived at work early that morning. The entire office was empty when a detective from Flint, Michigan called. She identified herself as a fingerprint technician employed by the state. Although she had a complete lack of authority in the matter, he was content to continue the conversation with her. The detective proceeded to ask for her opinion. He said, “Do you feel strongly that Kenneth Burton would return to Michigan on his own?” She answered the detective, “Yes, he definitely will no doubt return.” The detective said, “Then release him and tell him to return on his own.”

The appropriate paperwork was soon sent and I walked out of jail a free man, at least for a few short days. My first stop was a nearby restaurant where I called and asked Mei Leng if she could find a way to bring me some money. We did not own a car, and I had tried to stay out of them. They could become inescapable traps for a fugitive during an encounter with the law.

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There was no need for a car when living in a downtown area. Mei Leng called her girlfriend, Doris, who had a car, and asked for help. She agreed to make the trip to Bellingham. Peppermint Patty was visiting from Toronto and decided she would join Mei Leng and Doris for the trip.

Nothing had ever tasted as good as the chocolate malt I ordered before leaving the restaurant. The trip would take a couple hours for Mei Leng, so I went for a walk. A few blocks away I found a creek and sit down to enjoy my temporary freedom. Everything seemed very different. The air had a smell and taste to it. There were birds making
the most beautiful sounds. How was it possible that I had never taken the time to listen to them before? The sky was gorgeous. It was blue with big puffy snow-white clouds moving around endlessly. Was it possible that these were the same trees that I looked at my whole life and never saw them? The whole world was like something I had never paid attention to or appreciated. It was like I was seeing things for the first time. I felt like I had been living under a blanket that had just been removed. A great burden had been lifted from me and I felt at peace.

My rescue party arrived and we went for food and a place to talk. We made plans to spend the night at a motel and the next day I would catch a plane to Flint. Mei Leng had been raised in a Chinese home and did not understand some things about our culture. Because of that she frequently provided unintended entertainment. She did not disappoint this time. She loves to order anything on the menu that was new to her. Probably because of her poor eyesight and the excitement of our reunion, she had misread Postum on the menu. When the waitress came, she asked for a cup of “possum”. The waitress started giggling and said, “You want a cup of what?” We all laughed and began to reminisce about one of her other memorable moments in history.

Mei Leng had a large pot she used when she made spaghetti and soups, etc. She had loaned it to a girlfriend to take camping. The girl returned it covered in soot and burnt from the campfire. Mei Leng went to the hardware store and explained to a clerk what happened and asked her what she could use to get it clean again. The woman said, “Well, you could try elbow grease”. When she asked the woman where she could get some elbow grease, the woman smirked and said, “It would be nice if we sold it.”

Mei Leng thought that meant they did not carry it at that store. She proceeded to ask, “Do you know where I can find it?” The woman started laughing and ran towards the back of the store. After a while, she returned still laughing and explained that it was just an expression.
Mei Leng was raised in a Chinese home where little English was spoken. Over the years I have explained many idioms to her. It usually begins with her coming to me with a puzzled look on her face. She then says something like, “This makes no sense. Why would you want to kill two birds with one stone?”

Next time it would be, “How can it rain cats and dogs?” Our language is full of stuff like, “barking up the wrong tree, Elvis has left the building, and it’s not over ‘till the fat lady sings”’. Sometimes after I try to explain what the idiom means, she turns around and walks away shaking her head. This slightly less than five-foot woman has often left me feeling like I had my own portable entertainment unit.

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We all piled into a motel room for the night and visited some more before getting a few hours’ sleep. We said our goodbyes the next morning, and all too soon, I found myself on a plane to Flint. A friend picked me up at the airport and took me to my mother’s home. Just seeing Flint again reminded me of what Gypsy Jack had told me years ago. He said, “If the world had a rectum, it would be Flint, Michigan”.

It was good to see my mom again, and we caught up on all the news. We visited a restaurant the next day before I surrendered myself to the police. I was soon back in the country jail where I had been ten years ago

Genesee County jail was even worse than I remembered. It was a medium security prison originally built in 1903 and was now nothing more than cockroach infested ruins. There had been problems with overcrowding for decades. Shortly after I left there, the building was tore down and replaced. I never found out if it was because of a failure to meet building code or out of compassion for the many cockroaches that inhabited the building.

On a more positive note, there was one interesting thing that had taken place. Some jails have vulgar things on the walls. These usually consist of both drawings and writings. I’m sure you can imagine this
without my having to spell it out for you. Just before I came to that jail some of the prisoners had told the guards they wanted to clean the walls. They were furnished with the proper items and went to work. Many people would say, “Wow, what a coincidence”. Sorry, but there have been too many things like that for it to be all coincidence. God had those vulgar words and drawings removed before I got there.

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Mei Leng had returned to Vancouver and began pondering her future while receiving advice from those around her. She had called Bob and Helen to tell them about my situation. Bob was floored. “He’s a Christian now? Who’s he mixed up with?” Remembering the pastor of the Pentecostal church where I was baptized, Mei Leng said, “I think they call themselves Pentecostal”. Bob’s response was, “Oh no! They’re the worst kind. They not only get saved, but they want you to get saved and everybody else. They won’t leave you alone”.

I was able to manage a few phone calls to Mei Leng while she was trying to figure out what she should do. She was terribly worried about my future while I was ecstatic about it. I would tell her about what God had planned for his servants. I told her about the rapture and New Jerusalem. I was so excited that I could hardly think of anything else. I said, “God is real!”

Mei Leng said, “Are you ever going to be normal again or not?”

I had been touched by God. My sins were forgiven. I would not have to stand before God and try to explain why I did all those evil things. He loved me, and I knew it for a fact. I felt free for the first time in my life. I could feel the presence of the Holy Spirit like a fire burning in me every day. I just wanted to be with him. No! I will never be normal again.

After talking to a few more friends Mei Leng decided to come to Flint. She wanted to rescue me from the cult that had me brainwashed. She packed our stuff and put it on a truck before catching a flight to Flint. When Mei Leng arrived, I was able to talk to her again. She said
she would get me the best lawyer she could find. I explained to her that I already had the best lawyer a man could get. She still could not understand what was going on, but I knew that God was on the case. I planned to accept a court-appointed lawyer.

A newspaper reporter showed up at the jail to interview me. I believe he had some difficulty understanding why I would return to Flint on my own when it was apparent that they were unable to apprehend me. I summed it up by telling him I was more concerned with facing God than anything the state of Michigan could do to me.
CHAPTER 17

Unshackled

About a week after entering the county jail I was taken before a judge. He shuffled a bunch of papers and when he seemed satisfied, he looked up and asked if I had an attorney.

“No sir” I replied. The judge took a look around the courtroom and motioned for an attorney to represent me. He then told the attorney to look up a certain case and return in two weeks. He then looked at me and asked if I’d mind waiting in the county jail another week or two. I was shocked but somehow managed to say, “No sir.” I returned to my cell puzzled. Did the judge ask me that?

It seemed like I had favor with everybody I came in contact with. I did nothing to earn that favor and was certainly not worthy of it. Now I belonged to God. He would always go ahead of me and fight the battles for me. The Bible says in Proverbs 21:1 “The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.” This could be plainly seen. A cop gave me my Bible when I was told I could not have it. Another cop prayed and encouraged me and told other cops they could trust me to return to flint. A judge just asked me if I would mind being in jail for another week while they worked on my case. Was there anything God could not do?

On Wednesday, October 8, 1980, I made my second appearance before the Honorable Harry B. Mc Ara. These quotes from the sentencing have been condensed.
Judge Mc Ara: the formal judgment of sentence in this matter is as follows:

Part of the sentencing will be to dismiss the bench warrant.

Set aside the previous sentencing…

Set today October 8, 1980, as the day of sentencing in this matter….

Now the sentence of the court is as follows: That the defendant shall be placed on probation for a period of three years…

Judge Mc Ara: Is that your minister back there? Your name?

Reverend Gray: Pastor Gray

Judge Mc Ara: Is there any reason to put him on a drug program, sir?

Reverend Gray: I wouldn’t think so sir.

Judge Mc Ara: How about liquor and booze and all that stuff?

Reverend Gray: No sir, I believe he’s clean all the way through.

Judge Mc Ara: All right, ok, I’m gonna take your word for it.

Judge Mc Ara: Good luck, son, I hope you can take advantage of the chance that you’re getting here.

Seventy two days after I surrendered, I walked out of the Genesee County Courthouse as a free man. God is amazing.

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I had spent my life doing things the way I wanted to. Looking back, I do not think I made many good choices. Alcohol and drugs are so self-destructive it is puzzling why I began using them. They both damage the brain and facilitate acts of ungodliness. Some of the acts I committed were so repulsive that I shudder to think of them today. Some of the things I did were fun and there were some good times.
However deep inside me, my life was full of loneliness and pain. Fear stole my sleep many times. All of this could have been avoided if I had listened to that small still voice inside me. God’s word confirmed I was on the path to a place of eternal punishment. His word told me what he wanted from me to avoid that. His spirit confirmed that truth with my spirit. God guided me in the right direction when I started to listen to him. When I surrendered my life and made a commitment to do as he asked, he went to work on my behalf.

There is no desire in my life for alcohol or drugs. My hatred and anger are gone. It is difficult to be lonely when I can feel the presence of the Holy Spirit daily. He now helps me make the best decisions. When I agreed to his will in my life, he made me a free man within a few days. There are always things in my life that must be dealt with, but I know he is there to help me. He and I can face anything together. I am happy now and have peace.

As a new Christian, there were many things I needed to learn. God wants to know if we’re committed to him. I read in Psalms 7:9 …the righteous God trieth the hearts. It is important to be faithful in all things. God showed me that he was able to provide for his servants even if their circumstances looked hopeless. He taught me not to give up, but rather to wait on him. I want to have an attitude like Job who said …when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. Job 23:10. Once I learned to trust God and do things his way, he delivered me. It may, however, be necessary to prove that you are committed to him and his ways.

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Mei Leng was having difficulty understanding what was taking place. Our friends said I must be in a cult. There was no doubt the Holy Spirit was working in her life. She had set out to look for scientific and historical proof to show that the Bible was wrong, Christianity is not credible and God does not exist. What she came across astounded her. The more we spoke and she saw what God was doing in my life, the harder it was becoming to deny the obvious.
Pastor Gray and I sit down with her in the basement of the church for a talk. The pastor began to explain that God had a plan of salvation and that plan includes her. He told her of God’s love and forgiveness. She did not believe that God would forgive her. She said, “You don’t know the things I’ve done.” She had tears in her eyes when he said, “It does not matter to him. He will forgive you if you ask him to.”

All three of us knelt in front of metal folding chairs. She was crying when she asked God to forgive her for all the things she had done wrong. In that moment God performed a miracle. He changed her hard heart and brought her into his family. When the Holy Spirit moves upon someone like that the whole room is filled with God’s presence. It was so awesome! A week later we were married, and soon after that, she was also baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Mei Leng had been staying at my mother’s house while I stayed at my brother’s place. We were not married yet, and I didn’t want to leave myself open to any kind of accusations. I had read and understood 1 Thessalonians 5:22 “Abstain from all appearance of evil.” It is necessary to obey God if you want his wonderful blessing in your life.

Upon my release from custody, we were married. There was little choice as to where we would stay. My mother had a few rooms she rented out to people who were transitioning out of a half-way house. Most of them were well on their way to recovery but still had some problems. Although my mom needed the money to supplement her income, she offered to let us have a room until we could get on our feet.

I was happy that I could start attending church and learn more about my new life. My determination to be faithful in church attendance was something I was soon able to demonstrate. My mother did not drive and I had not yet acquired a driver’s license. That left me dependent upon my mom’s tenants, for a ride to church. Usually, I could wake somebody, but one Sunday morning it became clear that no one was getting up.
There was a ghetto between the church and myself. My hesitation to walk was well founded because the ghetto in Flint is not something to be taken lightly. It was not more than ten miles and the walk was uneventful.

By the time I reached the church, Sunday school had finished and the worship service was almost completed. Word passed around that I had walked and I was offered rides to church and home again whenever they were needed. I know God saw my determination to be faithful in church attendance.

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My determination to be faithful in tithes was equal to that of church attendance. It seems clear in the Bible that I cannot have God’s blessings on my finances without paying my tithes. Of all the weapons I’ve owned, my favorite was a 32 caliber pistol that went to a watery grave and has most likely been consumed by rust. Let’s suppose I came to your house with that 32 and tied you and whoever was with you to chairs. All your valuables would be placed in a box and carried to my car. The gun would go down the sewer so I would not get caught with it. When I tried to start my car, I discover a dead battery. If I returned to your house to untie you and ask for a ride back to my place, what would you say? Your thoughts would be something like, “You just robbed me and now you want my help?”

That is the same conversation God had with some people in the book of Malachi. He told them they were cursed because they robbed him of tithes and offerings. The good part is that he told them to pay tithes and offerings and he would pour them out a blessing. When people come to me asking for prayer on their finances, my first question is, “Are you paying your tithes?” It is a waste of time to pray over something God said was already cursed. God has also seen my determination to be faithful in tithes and always has more than meet my needs.
Among the first things, I did after my release was to call the local Gideon camp. A Gideon listened to me tell how God had changed my life after I read one of those new testaments that they give away. This same man said, “We are going to have a meeting on the weekend, and I would like you to come and share that story with the rest of the camp. I said yes, “I’d love to tell anybody about the things God has done for me”. When I shared the wonderful things God had done in my life, they fed me, gave me a few dollars and put me in their prayers.

Within a couple of days, a Gideons we had met, called me and asked if we needed a car. At that time I had little or no money and said so. He said he wanted two hundred dollars for the car and I could pay him when I was able. Philippians 4:19 says “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” A while later when we had an income, we paid the man and used the car for a couple of years. Someone ran into the back of the car and dented the bumper. An insurance man arrived at my place to settle the matter. He looked at the car and said he was going to total it. He said there was nothing I could do about it and he would send a check for four hundred dollars. We used the car for a long time and when it needed to be replaced, we were paid twice what it cost us.
CHAPTER 18

Job Hunters help Aunt Jemima

It was 1980 and the unemployment rate for the state was 13% in mid-1980 and went to 17.5% by January of 1983. Job hunting was a humorous nightmare. I felt compelled to tell the truth in all that I said and did, even when filling out employment applications. I read in Revelation 21:8 “…all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone…” If God was telling the truth, then it was obvious that I could not serve him without doing the same.

Try explaining to a potential employer that you are a convicted felon. Then add that you were a fugitive for the last ten years. Do not forget to add that you have plenty of experience in many different areas because it was necessary to relocate every time the police came snooping around. Oh, and one last thing. All your references are in another country in various cities and under a variety of names. If I hadn’t had God on my side, I would not have even tried.

The first employment we were able to secure paid minimum wage and was working in a small daycare. Mei Leng and I started work at 10 P.M. and worked all night cleaning till the children started arriving the next morning. It would have been so much easier to steal something or have Mei Leng bounce a few checks, but I was not going to give in to that temptation. I had made up my mind to serve God, whatever the cost. That was one time my stubbornness actually worked for me instead of against me.

I remember praying and asking God, “What am I doing here?” The Holy Spirit answered and said, “Look around. You have been
making friends with the kids and their parents that dropped them off in the mornings.” That Holy Ghost and fire inside me had left a burning desire to tell others about God. Those parents soon heard about the change recently experienced in my own life and were invited to church. If they didn't want to attend, I offered to take their children for them. What parent doesn’t want their children to do the right thing, even though they don’t themselves? Soon afterwards it became necessary to drop off a load of kids at the church before picking up my wife and a second car full.

This all sounds like work to most people, but I loved what I was doing. These children desperately needed moral guidance and examples to follow in their life. Most of them came from homes where they would never hear of the need for salvation. I did not want to see one of them suffer the things I went through.

As a bonus, they provided me with no shortage of entertainment. The pastor walked past my vehicle as I was leaving with a load of kids returning home. A small voice ask “Why do they call him the creature?” I explained that they were actually saying the preacher. Each child was given a new testament and told them they should read it daily. By placing it under their pillow, they would be reminded to read a little each night before going to sleep. The silence that followed while considering my instructions was disrupted by a serious voice that asked, “But what if the tooth fairy takes it?”

It was a little church that I attended, and the classes grew in size as more parents agreed to send their children. With the use of an old van I acquired, it was still necessary to start my pickups of thirty plus people, more than two hours before the classes started. There were some wet blankets who did not share my vision. If Mei Leng is reading this, “a wet blanket” means; A person who spoils other people's fun by failing to join in with or by disapproving of their activities. Anyways, as I was saying, there were some wet blankets who did not share my vision. A woman met me coming into the church with my second load
and said you need to get control of these kids. “They are running wild!”

“Yes,” I answered, “I agree with you, but you can see my problem. There are thirty of them and one of me. Why don’t you help?” Eventually, some people did reluctantly help.

Another man who drove the official church van would help me sometimes. While running late one morning, I asked him to pick up a kid whose house could be seen from the church door. He thought it was a waste of time and didn’t want to do it. Maybe that extra attention made the kid feel wanted and cared for. Whatever the reason, it was unimportant. Every person was worth whatever it took. We should always be thankful someone wanted to learn about God. Unfortunately, some people didn’t feel that way.

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My employer at the daycare center told me to stop pushing my Christianity on everybody. It was too late. We already had a bunch of the kids from that place attending church with us. We left the job soon after that. Maybe Bob was right. “They’re the worst kind. They not only get saved but they want you to get saved and everybody else.”

Things were not easy for us without decent employment. God wanted to see if we would remain faithful in difficult times as well as the good times. The Devil used every opportunity to present temptations. We heard of a job cleaning banks at night, so Mei Leng and I decided to give it a try. Things were uneventful until I found a teller’s safe open. A peak inside confirmed my suspicions. Even if they had cameras, I still could have made off with a nice handful of the green stuff without being seen.

The word of God says, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.” (Luke 16:10) I called the number we had been given for security and when I said I had found an open safe full of money, the guy didn’t know what to say. After confirming he heard me correctly, I
was asked to wait while he made some calls. He returned and said to shut the safe and lock it.

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A fellow employee working at another bank used to bring his dog to work. He came home one morning and got a call from the bank he had cleaned. That person told him his dog had made a deposit that they could not accept.

The Gideons called with an invitation to speak at a camp on the other side of town. We gladly went and told them of God’s work in our lives. There were so many times he had accomplished the seemingly impossible. He had delivered us from the hand of the enemy. We thanked them for providing the word of God to a needy world. What if there had not been a Gideon there that day when I needed a Bible? It was nearly impossible to believe what God had accomplished through that New Testament that cost about one dollar. They were encouraged to see and hear the results of their labors. We were privileged for the opportunity to thank them for their labors.

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I reported to my probation officer and found he was of a similar age. Unlike myself, most of his clients had been apprehended. He asked me questions regarding my past and found my case to be quite interesting. He said he would see me next month and we shook hands. He was friendly toward me and I enjoyed my visits. God had no doubt given me favor with him. When I started attending church and speaking for the Gideons, my wardrobe became three-piece suits instead of blue jeans and t-shirts. Wearing suits when I reported made me look more like an attorney than a client. Even with a full waiting room, I would be called next if I were present. There was no need to lie about my behavior since our last visit, so we talked about unrelated things. He noted that I had been given hours of community service to fulfill. He stated that my speaking for the Gideons, in churches and schools as well as prisons, was community service. Warning people to
stay away from drugs and crime was part of my message. After two years had passed he said there was no reason for probation and he ended it early.

People who knew me from the past were slow to believe I was serious until they spent time with me. No doubt Dixon had heard about my return and supposed conversion to Christianity. When I encountered him again, we were out in the open. It would be fair to say he was apprehensive about our meeting. He stood his ground as I walked toward him. When I was close enough, I gave him a big hug. If he ever did understand that hug or not, I’ll never know, but we parted on good terms. Later I was saddened to learn about his death and thankful to have made peace before he passed away.

There was a small group within the bike clubs that were accomplished schemers and scammers that I had been part of. We received a small patch to sew on our vest if and when we were accepted into the group. My ex-wife, Pame, knew of my involvement, so it was no surprise to hear her comments when I returned to Flint. She was positive I had scammed everybody. She thought I had faked my religious conversation to fool the courts. Having known me from the past, she was convinced this was the finest scam I had ever pulled off. No matter what I said, she remained unconvinced for quite some time.

My brother, Dale, had no difficulty recognizing the change in me. He was intelligent enough to avoid the path I had taken. It was comforting to me to know there would never come a day when I would visit him in jail. He is one of the few people that appeal to my twisted sense of humor. Dale has always basically been a good person, but good people still need forgiveness for their sins. The Bible says "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). It was a happy day for me when soon after my return to Flint he said he had joined me in serving God.

Soon after my return to Flint, I renewed my relationship with Pastor Gray and his wife, Nita. I hadn’t seen them in years and thought
I’d have a little fun with Nita. The local pizza store gave me some props, and I headed for the pastor’s home. With a pizza hat pulled down low on my face, I held an empty pizza box in front of me and rang the bell. When Nita answered the door, I announced the pizza had arrived. A surprised Nita said, “I didn’t order any pizza.” With a rough voice, I responded, “Look, lady, you ordered this and you’re going to pay for it.” She hesitated a moment and slowly reached for my hat and began pulling it up as she asked, “Kenny? Is that you?” We had a good laugh and became reacquainted.

Although she was a pastor’s wife, Nita seemed to get into more trouble than the stereotype pastors kid. Her sister, Linda, led the choir and worship service at the church. She also had four children and employed Nita full time as the nanny/housekeeper. Since all the kids called her Aunt Nita, we also did. We received a call from Aunt Nita asking if we could please come over right away. She was fighting back tears as she explained her situation. She had emptied the vacuum cleaner and started cleaning the fireplace. Because her head was in the fireplace, she had failed to notice the vacuum had not been properly reassembled. The soot had blown into the air and was now covering everything in the house. We told her to calm down, and we rushed right over to help clean up the mess. When we arrived, everything in the house, including her, was covered in soot. To this day, I wish I had not told her she looked more like Aunt Jemima than Aunt Nita because she started to cry again. I apologized and we eventually got everything cleaned up.

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There were some other relationships I had hoped to renew. My son, Kenny, was a teenager when I saw him again. He had always been on my mind and I knew it would be a difficult friendship to reestablish at this late date. We had a few visits before I realized his mother had never told him about our past. She told him we had some differences. He asked me to tell him what happened between his mom and me. He had only one parent since I was on the run. That was his only family. I
had no desire to hurt his mother and trash the only family he had. He had the right to know what had happened between us, but I wanted to wait till he was a little older. He was angry when I would not tell him and that seemed to make matters worse. I had tried to do the right thing by Pame and married her. I had tried to make the marriage work and was surprised when she found someone else. I was a failure as a father to him, something I will regret till the day I die.

My other adult son, Nathan, was an infant when I left Flint as a fugitive. He had no memory of that time. Evelyn never spoke negatively about me. When we were able to meet, we were both overjoyed about it. He understands why I was missing from his childhood and bears no grudge toward me. We began a relationship that only grows stronger each day. Although we live in separate states, we converse on a regular basis. I admit I was a complete failure as a father to him and his brother. I deeply regret that I am unable to have the same relationship with Kenny.

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We continued to seek better employment at every opportunity. Mei Leng submitted her resume to a doctor. I took her to the interview. We arrived at an empty waiting room. The doctor stepped out of his office and introduced himself. When he invited Mei Leng in for the interview, I began reading my Bible.

There were so many things I wanted to learn about my new life that no idle time was wasted. A woman entered the waiting room who was seeking the same position. We made some small talk before she asked if I was reading the Bible. When I confirmed it was, she told me her son had been telling her about Jesus. She expressed an interest in learning more. I shared my recent experiences with her and told her how I lived a life centered on myself that grew worse every day. It was a life of emptiness and loneliness based on self-gratification. Now I was happy and had peace. I could feel the presence of the Holy Spirit. God’s plans for my future were better than winning the lottery. It was exciting to tell her these things and I could see hunger and desire
-growing in her. Mei Leng had finished her interview and opened the office door to leave. When the doctor and her saw what was taking place in the waiting room, they backed into his office and quietly closed the door. He had told Mei Leng he also was a Christian and suggested they pray. The two of them knelt in his office and began to pray for this woman. The presence of the Holy Spirit became very strong in that waiting room as we talked about God’s desire to save all that are willing. She needed God’s help and wanted peace and joy in her life. There were tears in her eyes as she asked me how to be saved. We knelt on the chairs in the waiting room and prayed that God would forgive her as he had me. He did. It was such a wonderful thing to see that I wanted to dance and shout. This time when the office door opened there was joy to be had by all. God had performed the miracle of salvation in that waiting room.

While that did not improve our employment status, it was a wonderful experience. We looked for ways to share the good news with others. A local Christian bookstore sold some tracts that looked like a twenty dollar bill when was folded up. When unfolded they read, “Disappointed? You won’t be if you let Jesus into your life” Below that was enough information to send someone in the right direction. The idea was to leave them laying around for people to find. There were other tracts in my collection, but these were my favorite. When escorting my wife shopping, I would leave tracts everywhere. She would hold up a blouse and ask, “Do you like it?”

Invariably I would put a twenty dollar tract in the pocket while telling her, “Yes, it’s nice.”

At the magazine rack, it was easy to place one between the pages like it was a coupon. The grocery stores were a wealth of opportunity even though I would never think of opening or damaging any product as that would be inappropriate. Of the many places I found to distribute tracts, the coffee aisle was the best. Larger containers of coffee, come in a can that has a plastic lid. When the can is opened the lid is then used to keep the coffee fresh. It was easy to place the tracts
under the lid, and it actually looked like a coupon. Having been a successful fugitive for ten years gave me confidence in my ability to distribute tracts completely unnoticed. Mei Leng and I would often shop at a supermarket near my mother’s house. While she would gather food, I would scatter tracts.

One night we were shopping there and realized that neither of us had any cash as we approached the checkout. I asked the cashier if it were possible to pay with a personal check. She said, “I’ll take a credit card or check or whatever you got.” I asked, “Why would you be so quick to take a personal check from me? You do not know me.”

She answered, “Sure I do. You’re the twenty dollar man!” When I thought about this incident later, I realized that although the whole store knew what I was doing, no one asked me to stop!

The twenty dollar man had been receiving many invitations from the Gideons, and now they were adding something new. The Gideons have an annual event they call a pastor’s rally that takes place on a Saturday evening. They invite all the pastors in their area for an evening banquet followed by a speaker who explains their mission and progress. This is usually accompanied by a testimony that demonstrates the fruit of their labors. We were being asked to give that testimony. Between the two of us, we ended up speaking in almost every city in the state of Michigan. It soon becomes routine to drive to another state to speak. When we spoke at pastors’ rallies, we would often be invited to come to at least one church the next day.

A pastor who heard us speaking at the Gideons pastor appreciation dinner invited us to stay with him and speak at his church. Sunday morning he told the congregation he had been lying in bed about to fall asleep. A thought came to him about his safety. “Do you have any idea who you have in your house? Do you know what those people have done?”

After worrying for a bit, he thought, “That’s just the devil. God’s changed those people” He said, “I rolled over and went to sleep”.

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Between witnessing, passing out tracts and speaking for the Gideons, we still had to make a living. My next job provided no small amount of memorable moments. The job was managing an apartment complex near the downtown area of Flint. It was in a racially mixed ghetto with the second highest crime rate in the city. There was some degree of comfort to know we were a full block away from the area considered the worst in the city. Flint Michigan has been called the most dangerous city in America repeatedly. It has claimed the title of the city with the highest violent crime per capita in the USA. The amount and degree of violence is beyond the imagination of most people. Forbes has also ranked Flint as one of the most dangerous places for women. The most striking attack of 2012 occurred when an 87-year-old woman was raped outside her home in broad daylight. The complex I was to care for was a well-built square brick building that had an open courtyard in the center. It contained about thirty apartments plus a house next door. It had gone downhill before my arrival. A pimp had cut a prostitute and left blood all over the walls and carpet in one apartment. There were bullet holes in the stairwell and someone had a marijuana plant growing in their window.

When I started, there was a property management company that was responsible for renting out the apartments. My time was spent repairing, cleaning and learning about blood. Blood stains will seep through paint unless a sealer is used first. Blood cannot be easily
removed from carpet and must be replaced. Prospective tenants will rent somewhere else if they see too many blood stains.

The property management company sent tenants that were as bad as or worse than the ones I already had. The absence of cockroaches was one good thing about the building. The first tenant they sent me was a dirty family who was moving to Flint from Florida. Their belongings had the worst infestation of cockroaches imaginable. As if that wasn’t bad enough, when I brought in a pest control company, they said they didn’t want their place sprayed. They had their own sprayer and could take care of their own apartment without any help.

Their inefficiency at controlling roaches was evident. We had a knock down dragged out battle when I told them that I was not going to live in the same building with those bugs. It took me several months to eliminate them completely. The owner of the building eventually consented to allow me to find my own tenants. My plan was to replace my worse tenant with a better one and then repeat that process till I cleaned out the whole building. I felt that with God’s help, I could do anything and although it took a while, I was able to accomplish it.

I heard gunshots and was told later some woman went to borrow sugar from her neighbor and had got into an argument that ended with gunfire. A woman was raped and robbed out front of the building. Then there was a dead body in the road when I left for church one morning. There was one tenant who paraded naked in her window in an attempt to lure customers inside. It was a violent neighborhood, but we always felt safe. I served the same God who had protected a man who spent the night in the midst of a bunch of lions.

One night I told a tenant that I was not going to have loud parties fueled with alcohol and drugs in the apartment building anymore. She needed to end the party and start hunting for a new place to live. The next morning I found the tires on my van had been slashed. When I took a close look at the tires, I realized that there was almost no tread anywhere. It was a wonder they still held air. Someone had helped me to see those tires were dangerous and I needed new ones. Four new
tires were installed, and I went safely on my way. God sure helped me handle that differently than I would have a little while ago. On another occasion, someone stole the van. I found it a few days later. It was up on blocks and the tires had been removed. Once again I got four more tires and went on my merry way. Like I said it was a rough neighborhood.

There were times we seen people saved at the apartment complex. A kid I had been bringing to church for a couple of years was named Mickey. He had a terrible home life. If I correctly understood what I had been told, his father, Kevin, would have these conversations with his wife while holding her off the ground and against the wall with his hand on her throat. They had been invited to accompany Mickey to church on many occasions to no avail. It was a good thing for their son, but they would not be going anytime soon. Knowing that God can change lives, I keep them on my prayer list. Kevin called me late one Sunday afternoon. He said “Hi, it’s Kevin. How are you doing?” My first thoughts were something along the lines of, I’m sure he’s not interested in my health and welfare. He said, “I need to talk to you.” Now I could tell from his voice he had been crying. I told him to come over while I anxiously waited to see what this new development was about. He arrived at my apartment fighting back tears. God had been working overtime on him. He had questions but was ready to commit his life to God. We talked a while before he knelt in my living room and asked forgiveness for his sins. I gave him a Bible and told him it was time to leave for church as it was starting soon. God is amazing.

As a landlord, I was slowly improving and learning tricks like painting the lawnmower an ugly color so no one would want to steal it. Waiting outside to meet a prospective tenant was a good idea because you could look in their car. The way people keep their house or apartment and their car is usually about the same. If the car looks like it has not been cleaned in five years, then they may not be a good tenant. My favorite was to get them talking. If they talked long enough, you could tell what they were like. One time a nice woman came to view apartments with her young child. I took her application
and showed her around. When her child opened the over twenty-year-old oven door, she exclaimed “Look, mom, a brand new stove.” I knew right away what kind of a housekeeper she was.

I returned from a speaking engagement after a short absence and heard my phone ringing repeatedly. I let it ring while I carried in stuff from the van. Someone was being persistent, so I went to the answering machine to play back the messages. They were from Sherry, a large black woman that sounded frantic. “Ken, if your home, please answer! I need you!” While I was trying to digest that information the phone rang yet again. I ignored the smirk on my wife’s face and answered it. Sherry was near hysterical when she said, “Ken, I need you to come over right now!” and then let out a scream. The sound of her voice told me it was either rape or attempted murder. “What’s wrong Sherry?” “There is a bat in my apartment!” “What?” “There is a bat in my apartment.” Another scream….”It’s flying around in here!” “Can’t you just open a window or hit it with a broom or something?” She yelled ‘NO! You gotta help me!” “OK, OK, calm down and I will be right over.”

I hurried over and when I tried my key, I remembered why it would not open the door. A few days before my trip, Sherry had asked me if she could change her lock. I told her I would take care of it soon as I had time, but she could not wait. It had to be done then. “Ok,” I said, “if you use a locksmith, but you must be sure to give me a copy of the key”. She had been reminded more than once but never gave me a key. When I was unable to open the door, I repeatedly knocked to no avail. I went back home and called again. “Sherry, you never gave me the key I asked for and now I cannot open the door. You have to let me in.” She yelled “No! No!” I said “Sherry, I cannot open the door. You have to let me in…..Where are you?” “I’m in my bed with the blankets over my head and I am not coming out till that thing is gone.” By now other people in the apartment complex had started to come outside to see what all the commotion was about. Rather this was my job or not, I had to deal with it, or things were going to get worse. I told her to calm down and I would figure something out.
The driveway to the parking lot ran down the side of the building. Many apartments had windows facing that driveway. Sherry’s bedroom window, as well as mine, faced that direction. The complex did not keep a ladder that would reach her second-floor window, but that seemed to be the best way I could get in there to save her from that vicious bat. Against my better judgment, I parked my van under her window in front of the small group of people who now wanted to know what was going on. I still could not reach the window till I added a kitchen step stool to the roof of my van. Fortunately, Sherry did not think it necessary to lock her windows on the second floor. As I slid her window open, I heard a voice coming from my own apartment window. Na na na na na na na na ……Someone was singing the Batman theme song. I made a mental note to repay my wife’s sensitivity to the situation when an opportunity presented itself.

I managed to pull myself up and halfway through the window while the group below grew in number. It was then I realized Sherry was right under the window with blankets over her head and was not about to move. It was a fairly soft landing. I quickly found a broom and located the small terrorist. When I smacked the bat with the broom, Sherry let out a scream. It wasn’t quite dead so I gave it another whack with the broom and heard another scream. What the heck just happened? A white man climbed into a black woman’s bedroom window in broad daylight in front of an audience while she was screaming. I guess if you live a dull life, you’ll never have any good stories for the grandkids. I let myself out the door and went home to talk to my wife about her singing.

Things were calming down at the apartment complex, and it allowed us to travel more often. A speaking engagement for the Gideons took us through Chicago. We stopped for gas and when a young man came to help, I started telling him what God had done for me. People are hungry for a solution to their problems. It seems that they already know deep inside that it’s got something to do with a supreme being but are in need of some guidance. This man could see and feel my excitement as I shared the reason I felt that way. He was
interested and wanted to continue the conversation, but the station was busy and there was little time between customers. I hung around for a while, then gave him a new testament before I left feeling like I had failed.

We had a wonderful time and enjoyed God’s blessings at our speaking engagement. The Gideons always treat us like royalty as well as the many churches that invited us to visit them. I have always felt like the least worthy among God’s people, and they always made me feel like a visiting dignitary. Most of these people didn’t understand that I would have paid them for the privilege of being God’s cheerleader.

With the life I’ve lived it’s not too difficult to understand why my sense of humor is a bit twisted. Quite often I say things nobody understands or laughs at except me. I remember speaking to a high ranking official in the Gideons. He was making some comments about a camp whose membership had dwindled somewhat. I proceeded to tell him about Hunter Thompson’s book about the Hells Angels. Their leadership was experiencing the same type of problem. They had their camp go beat up the other camp for letting their numbers get so low. It became one of those moments when I restrained my laughter because someone was giving me a puzzled look. God had given me the ability to find humor now whereas before I was so full of anger and hate.

Unable to forget what I perceived as a failure, we returned to the same service station on the trip back home. The odds were against finding the same young man working at that moment, but there he was. When he recognized me, he approached with an excited look on his face. “Hey, remember me?” he asked. “Yes,” I replied, “of course I do”. “After you left here the other day things finally slowed down. A guy came in here telling me the same things you were saying. He showed me how to be saved and I prayed right here at the gas station.” He reached out to shake hands with me and said something to the effect that he was a Christian and my brother now. There was no need for him to tell me that because I could see it on his face and hear it in
his voice. God taught me a lesson that day. The Bible says. “We are laborers together with God.” (1 Corinthians 3:9) This is not a one-man show. We all work together and that day, I had done my part.

A guy from church named Jimmy told me his son was on his way to prison. People always feel that someone that’s been behind bars would be the best one to visit their incarcerated loved one. I’m not sure if that’s true, but I agreed to accompany him on the next visit. He was being held at the Jackson State Prison in Michigan. I had declined a formal invitation by the state of Michigan to live there. Never the less I had always wanted to see that place, but as a visitor of course. I believe they had started building that place before eighteen fifty and had overcrowding problems almost from the start. I do not know about today, but at one time it was the largest walled prison in the world with nearly 6,000 inmates. The concrete wall around it is nearly thirty-five feet high and features 12 watch towers. I went on the visit and did my best to be an encouragement. I shared what God had done for me once I made a commitment to serve him. I do not believe his son had any real interest in serving God, but that was not my business. Each person must decide for their self to accept or reject the gospel message. My part was done. The prison itself was dismal and loathsome. I thank God I have not had to spend my life in such a place.

Jimmy and I had a conversation later that I will never forget. He told me he had gotten his son a radio. Soon afterwards someone stole it. He was disgusted. Jimmy looked at me and said, “The place is full of thieves.” Prisons can have some disreputable characters in them.

My wife answered the door and found a tenant named Joyce. She had come to pay her rent and was invited inside. She was upset and started pouring her heart out about how nothing was going right. She was fighting tears when I came into the room and said, “I know exactly what your problem is. You have an enemy who is out to destroy your life. He tried to do the same thing to me. When I turned my life over to God, everything changed.” She was in tears when I told
her He would help her if she would let Him. She got on her knees in my living room and asked God’s forgiveness. God is amazing.

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After my apartment complex had been cleaned up, the police almost never got calls to my building. I received compliments from the local police. The foot patrolman in my neighborhood and I became friends. We were standing in the driveway talking when one of my new tenants walked by.

He said, “I know her. She’s a hooker.” I thought I’d give her a few days and see if she was working out of her apartment.

A few days later she and another woman ripped off a customer. He came back the next night and threw bricks through the wrong windows. I moved her out quickly, but not before her sister tried unsuccessfully to make a deal with me.
Arriving home one day, I remembered that the tenant in the house had not paid her rent. After parking the car, I told my wife I would be home shortly. The Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, “Take your wife with you”. Mei Leng was not on the payroll and I did not normally take her when I collected rent. This time, I said, “I need you to go with me.”

I knocked on the door and the young girl inside called through the door “Who is it?”

When I answered, “It’s Ken, the landlord”, she opened the door. As the door opened, I said, “And my wife.” She squealed and took off running to another room. She had forgotten to dress.

What if God had not been watching over me? What if I had gone there alone? I could have walked into the apartment if she was behind the door. Maybe she would have been offended if I said I didn’t want to trade sex for rent. She could have said I forced myself on her. She could have run out the door yelling rape. It was a trap, and nothing good would have come out of it for me.

Some women in the apartment complex thought nothing of trying to make a deal to get out of paying rent. When I talked to one woman about some business, she said “Ken, do you know anywhere I could
get a job?” I told her I didn’t know anywhere. She said, “I will do anything for money.” I told her to just keep looking.

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There was another cute young thing in the building who lived with her boyfriend named Bobby. Once when she was on the second floor leaning over the railing, I told her to be careful not to fall. I was standing on the ground under her. She started flirting and said, “If I fall, will you catch me?” I told her she better go get Bobby to catch her. Apparently, that was not in her plans for Bobby. I believe she tried to kill him in his sleep. She put a large pot of oil on the stove and turned it on high before leaving the apartment while he slept. The overheated oil filled the apartment with thick smoke. If I had not seen the smoke seeping out cracks around the door, he could have been dead soon. Bobby came outside half-dressed, with bloodshot eyes, coughing and gagging. It should be noted that the battery had been removed from the smoke detector.

That was not the only time I kept the building from burning down. I came home and glanced across the courtyard and saw orange reflecting off a glass patio door. Fire has a unique color and I knew in an instance what it was. I ran to the apartment and beat on the door. A tenant had set the cupboards above the stove on fire. When I got there, everybody was standing there in a panic. The fire was easy to put out, but in another few minutes, it would have been out of control. There were other similar incidents. A few years after I left that job, I was told by a tenant that a fire had gutted a large part of the building.

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Prostitutes, cockroaches, hot willing women and fires were not the only things I dealt with at the apartment complex. My employment began in the early 1980’s and during that time, Michael a man of about thirty, took up residency there. He had an abundance of male visitors, and someone later told me he was a homosexual. He would be missing for a few days at a time and although I didn’t know it, they were trips
to the hospital. When I collected rent from him, I could see that he was in poor health. He coughed frequently and said to me, “I am so sick.” I thought he might be open to hearing the gospel message. I do not consider myself to be better than another person and will share the gospel with anyone. The sins I have committed and the sins another has committed may not be the same, but we both need forgiveness. God does not seem to be as concerned with what we have done as he is with what we will do with the forgiveness he offers. I am not perfect enough to condemn anyone for what they do or have done.

When my wife was home, and I had an opportunity, I invited Michael to my apartment to visit. We discussed the plan that God had for our salvation. How wonderful it was that he was willing to forgive one and all. Michael seemed to have no problem accepting the things I told him as the truth. The subject of his homosexuality was never brought up. During our conversation the Holy Spirit made him understand that he would have to make some changes. He asked me, “You mean God wants me to give up the way I live?”

I explained, “Yes, we all have to give up our sins and make some changes in our lives to serve God.”

The Bible says, Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Galatians 5: 19 – 21. The good news is that God will help us when we ask him. The Holy Spirit was in that room calling him, but he resisted.

Sadly, he answered, “I just cannot do that, Ken.” I know I did what God wanted me to do, but I was so disappointed. When his family came to remove his belongings, I asked them what had happened. They informed me he had died of cancer.
There was a woman and her adult daughter who lived in the building and worked at the hospital. As soon as Michael died, she told me they were moving out of their apartment immediately. When I asked what caused the panic to move so suddenly, she said, “Because of him”. She told me he had died of AIDS. She said, “We do not know much about AIDS or how it spreads. We’re getting out of here now to be safe”. She was genuinely worried and it was a time when we were just starting to hear about AIDS. I was concerned when I cleaned to prepare the apartment for the next tenant. I soon reasoned that God was more than able to protect me from anything and stopped my worrying. Looking back I can see the love of God as he gave Michael every opportunity to repent before he died. He is a merciful God.

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I encountered one of my former tenants named Emma outside the church. Mei Leng and I engaged her in conversation, and she seemed bothered by something. We inquired as to the problem, but she said it was personal and could only show Mei Leng. She turned around and showed Mei Leng a large bulge on her thigh. A blood vessel had broken under the skin and she didn’t know for sure what to do. When my wife told me about it, we decided that she needed to go to the hospital. She had a bad heart, and it seemed the best move in light of that. Arriving at the hospital, I suggested Mei Leng go inside and bring out a nurse with a wheelchair. Tell them she has a bad heart and what may be a broken blood vessel. Mei Leng was all upset when she hurried up to the desk and said “We need a wheelchair, Emma …in the car… I think she has a broken heart. The nurse said, “It sounded more like a case for Ann Landers.”
CHAPTER 21

Stupid Cat

Mei Leng’s mom, Barbara, became ill and was taken to the hospital where she was diagnosed with cancer. Mei Leng flew out to be with her. Barbara had previously been visited by the Jehovah’s Witnesses a number of times and was confused when Mei Leng tried to talk to her about salvation. I started asking everyone to pray for her. When I spoke in a church, I asked the whole congregation for their prayers. I asked the Gideons and everybody else I ran into. There had to be hundreds of people praying for her by the time I left to be with Mei Leng. When Barbara understood the plan of salvation, she accepted Jesus as her savior. After she made peace with God, she asked me to promise that I would take care of Mei Leng. Just before her passing, she told her daughter that she was excited to see the things she had been told about. We decided soon afterwards that we would try to move back to Vancouver.

I requested and received an application to enter Canada as a landed immigrant. I was asking permission to live there legally for an indefinite period. When I got to, “Have you ever committed a crime?” I thought it best to write a separate letter explaining my unusual circumstances. That way I could also include God’s part in this ordeal and explain why there was a different in my character. It was, of course, going to take more than just my word to establish that there was indeed a difference. I was also asked for letters from prominent people as to their opinion of my character. I was told that they must be from people of my community other than family.
At first, I could not think of anybody that would be able to help me. Then I remembered Pastor Gray; he wrote a letter for me.

The foot patrolman I had befriended came by; I asked him if he would help. He agreed and came back a few days later with a letter.

There was no question about whether my probation officer would help or not. He wrote a beautiful letter.

We had befriended, Drew and Rosemary, a couple we met through the Gideons. We knew that Drew worked with something to do with the courts. It turns out that he was a Special Deputy Sherriff; he also offered support with a letter.

Mei Leng reminded me of a family she had done some work for. We had become good friends with that family. She asked if I remembered that he was a federal judge. A letter from him could carry some weight.

Here are some excerpts from those letters. Complete copies of these letters have been included in the appendix at the back of this book.

Reverend Lester Gray: …”Ken has been active in the community donating time, money and efforts to help others. The character of Kenneth Burton is that of a true God-fearing, Bible living Christian”.

Bruce Sepanak, Police officer for the city of Flint Michigan: “It has been my pleasure to become acquainted and work with the Burton’s in their community. The Burton’s are outstanding community leaders in their civic activities”.

Robert W. Standal Jr., Genesee County Adult Probation Officer: “This man has exhibited characteristics of honesty, reliability, and punctuality. It is felt that Mr. Burton poses no threat whatsoever to this or any other community. …It is this writer’s opinion that Mr. Burton will never again be involved in illegal activities”.

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O. Drew Pitts, Special Deputy Sherriff: “Over the years Ken has become a good friend, a very trusted friend, and someone whom I have confidence in as a law abiding citizen”.

Dennis L. Runyan, Federal Administrative Law Judge: “I have known Ken for several years, and have found him to be a very honest, dependable, reliable, trustworthy Christian. …I can unqualifiedly state that his conduct in recent years causes me to have no doubt of his outstanding character”.

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In due time, I was granted a meeting at the Canadian Embassy in Detroit, Michigan. The gentleman I spoke with was at a loss for words as he read my application and supporting letters. He kept shaking his head and looking up at me. I do not remember his exact words, but he was smiling when he said something to the effect that this was just amazing. The look on his face said he could hardly believe that such a thing was possible. He looked at me and said “What you are asking for is about the equivalent of a presidential pardon in the U.S. You know what? I’m going to do it.” He expressed to me that he was going to see that this matter was taken care of. He was smiling and was still in a state of awe when we left. I knew this kind of things can take a while, but it was obvious that God was already working on the case. We returned home to wait for the application to process. While we were waiting, we started another project.

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My wife loves cats and a friend from the church gave her a chocolate pointe Siamese cat. When she would pick it up and pet it, the cat would wiggle out and walk over to me and sit. She would get so upset with that animal. After numerous rejected attempts to cuddle, Mei Leng expressed her frustration to me. I looked at her and said, “What you need is a baby”. We talked about it for a few days. Knowing that we should start a family, we decided it was a good idea.
It was quite evident that the cat was never going to return any affection to her.

It was not long before Mei Leng looked like she had swallowed a watermelon. This is quite a traumatic event for women that can cause changes to their personality, till they deliver. I survived the pregnancy and Terrell was born in December. He was a happy baby. Mei Leng was funny because she was not too sure what to do with him. The first time she woke up after coming home from the hospital, she realized there were no nurses to help. She looked quite concerned. I told her how to give him a bath in the kitchen sink with the vegetable spray. She soon became a competent mother. A baby was just what she needed. Unlike the stupid cat, Terrell actually liked her and she could not stop fussing over him. I did some fussing of my own when we received the hospital bill for thirteen thousand dollars.

There had been some minor problems during Mei Leng’s pregnancy resulting in this enormous bill. My pay at that time was four hundred a month with an apartment. If I paid them twenty five dollars a month, I could have it paid off by the time Terrell was in his early forties. Maybe he could help when he was old enough. My tithes were always paid. That meant I had God’s blessing on my finances. Terrell would not have to help with the bill. God would come to my aid like he said he would. Sometimes you have to learn to wait on Him. Someone from the hospital showed up to tell me that they were giving me a ten thousand dollar grant. My part was now three thousand dollars. It took a little while, but we paid it. Now it was time to show the world, my expensive child.

Mei Leng prepared Terrell for his first visit at church during a serious December snowstorm while I planned more mischief. I had watched Aunt Nita’s curiosity get her in trouble more than once and thought I might use it to my advantage. Nita and the rest of the ladies at the church including my mom would be anxiously waiting to see Terrell for the first time. We had some stuffed animals I looked through till I found a chimpanzee. I wrapped it up in five or six baby
blankets. When we parked in front of the church, the snow was deep, and the wind was blowing it everywhere. Mei Leng waited in the car with Terrell, and I proceeded to the nursery with my well-wrapped chimpanzee. The room was full of women waiting for the big moment. I laid my bundle in a crib and said, “I’m going back to the car to get Mei Leng”.

As I turned to leave, I said to Aunt Nita, “Do not touch him, I’ll be right back”.

When I returned with Mei Leng and Terrell and entered the nursery, Nita’s face was red. She was still blushing as she said, “I think he looks more like his father”.

The influence these “church women” had on my wife was often questionable. Sometimes it was just a matter of how you interpreted the Bible. For instance, one woman said, “I know that Ephesians 5:22 says, Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, but nowhere does it say how often”.

After being around that bunch, I noticed a change in my wife’s attitude. One day I was thinking about how God blessed me with such a wonderful woman. When I saw her later that day, I said, “I am fortunate to have you for a wife”. She looked me straight in the face and said, “Yes, you are”.

On another occasion, I realized God had been instrumental in her and I being together. I said to her, “Mei Leng, I believe that God put us together”.

She looked up at me and said, “Why would he do that to me?”

The time came when I finally started to fight back. I had been in the bedroom praying for longer than usual. When I came out, she said, “Boy, you must have been bad”. I said, “I was praying for you”. She is not one that is going to be easily outdone and it came as no surprise what she said on another occasion when she was less than pleased with me. “The Bible says in Proverbs 18:22 that I’m a good thing. It doesn’t
say anything about you husbands being any good.” Sometimes I wonder if I should encourage my wife to keep reading the Bible and hanging out with women from the church.

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We were thrilled to find my papers in the mailbox granting permission to live in Canada. We were soon packed and waving goodbye to the apartment complex. Mei Leng’s father had been living in a senior citizens home prior to her mom’s illness. We arrived in Canada to find that he had fallen and had hip surgery. He did not recover and was unresponsive, but Mei Leng was able to see him before he passed away a few hours later.

We moved into the family home and our belongings arrived a few days later. The house had been left to Mei Leng and her two brothers. Neither of the brothers seemed interested in the house so we offered to buy them out. One brother owed Mei Leng some money so we wiped his debt out and paid him the remainder. The other brother stated he would sell for cash. He was adamant about it being cash. Terrell was walking now and I had bought him one of those little toy safes for kids. The brother arranged to meet us at the attorney’s office. I put the cash in Terrell’s safe. We met at the attorney’s office. When the time came and they asked if I brought the money, I said, “Yes”.

I called Terrell, who was playing a little ways away from us and asked him to bring me his safe. I opened it and handed them the cash. Everybody’s jaw dropped when they saw the money come out of his toy safe. It was thousands of dollars.

The brother was shocked and gasped. He managed to blurt out, “I, I didn’t mean cash”.

“But you said cash,” I responded with a perfectly straight face, but inside I was laughing.

Thank God we now had a house, but I had to wait on some more papers from the government before I was allowed to work. I decided to
renovate the whole house while I waited on those papers. Mei Leng seemed to like the whole motherhood thing, so we had another talk. Living in Canada meant that we now had free health care. Like everything else, there are some good things and some bad thing about free health care. The good thing was no cost babies. We could have another baby free. My wife loves a sale. Coupled with the fact that it would be easier to raise two children than one, it was a bargain we could not pass up. In a year and a half, Terrell had an accomplice named Nicholas.

We were comfortably settled into our new house when we had visitors. There was a knock at the door. I answered and found two lovely ladies that wanted to talk. They informed me they were from the Jehovah’s Witness. They had been making sporadic visits to Mei Leng’s mom, Barbara, and were unaware that she had passed away. They wanted to tell me all about God. I explained to them that I knew God and that he had changed my life. We talked, and they kept trying to explain to me what was true and what was not.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses started with God’s word years ago, but somewhere along the line, they took a left turn when they should have gone straight. Here is what I have to say to the Jehovah’s Witnesses. If we took a person of average intelligence and placed him in a room alone, we could ask him to read the Bible from cover to cover. Assuming he had no preconceived ideas about the Bible and would believe what he read, he would come forth having an understanding similar to all mainstream Christian denominations such as the Baptist, Pentecostal, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Nazarene, etc. Never in a million years would he ever conceive of a doctrine as convoluted as the Jehovah’s Witnesses believe and teach. The Jehovah’s Witnesses do not believe in The Trinity. They also believe Jesus is the archangel, Michael, and that hell is not a place of eternal suffering, but is the grave, etc. There are many other odd things too numerous to mention. However, the most importing thing to note is this: I quote their publication called The Watchtower. “A Christian with an ‘earthly
The Watchtower says just the opposite. “Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” John 3:3 NIV. I tried to share God’s plan of salvation to no avail. Finally, one woman said to me “You want me to believe that a God came to earth and died for me? I said yes. She said “No. No. Never.”

I said, “Then I cannot help you.” They looked at each other then back at me again as if to say, ‘Can you believe the audacity of this heathen? We came here to help him.’ I am sorry to say that brought a close to our conversation. We never had another visit from the Jehovah’s Witnesses again.

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We did have a visit from an East Indian woman’s car which was unusual. Our house was on a busy main street. All driveways and garages were in the back of the houses and accessible from an alley. Our alley was narrow and on a hill. Nearly every house had a fence across the back of their property. A woman from India was driving down the alley when her car stalled. Due to a lack of driving experience, she soon flooded the engine, and the car would not start. She thought she could push it down the hill and start it. When she tried that, the car soon veered to one side because it had no driver. That left no room between the car and the fence for her to reenter the car. It was moving at a good rate of speed by the time it got to my house and took out the fence before hitting my car.

Eventually, her husband came and retrieved their car. However, that left me in the unenviable position of having to report this accident to the police. “Where were you when the accident occurred sir?”

“Oh, I was not in my car. It was parked in my driveway.”

“Oh, OK, who was driving the other car?”

hope’ can enter into God's kingdom without having been born again. The Watchtower, 2/15/86, p. 14.
Mmm…well this is where things started to get difficult. I did not want to end up in custody for drug use, especially since I no longer use them. If they tested me for drugs and found out I was clean, would I end up in front of a psychiatrist before they took me to a padded cell? I wondered if his next question would be, “You got nothing better to do than harass the police?” I braced myself for the worst and said, “Well sir, there was no one driving the other car.”

I could see by the look on the officer’s face that I was standing on some shaky ground. After many words, I was finally able to convince him that I was sane and explain the accident in detail to his satisfaction.
God’s help in our life made things go much better. We were content knowing he would always provide when a need arose. When I needed some work, He helped again with a fun job. A man who sold autographs and Hollywood memorabilia from his store in a mall offered me employment. I accepted. He had a karate jacket signed by Elvis priced at $50,000. There was a dress previously owned by Norma Jean, later known as Marilyn Monroe, for the same price. He had autographs of everybody from Buddy Holly to the Beatles and John Wayne. In his store was a flag from the movie, “Back to the Future” and one of the bottles from “I Dream of Jeannie.” Although I’m not a collector, I do have a few choice autographs. The owner of the store told me that he was going to have an autograph session and asked if I would mind helping out. I agreed and suggested that I take pictures of each person seeking an autograph and then sell them an 8 X 10 when we printed the film. I have never been a sports fan and knew nothing of Bobby Hull. Later I learned he is regarded as one of the greatest ice hockey players of all time. We joked and laughed for a couple of hours taking pictures. I confessed my ignorance of sports to Bobby before I asked him if he would sign something for me. He cheerfully agreed, and I handed him a baseball bat. Under his signature he wrote, “By the way, it’s hockey, you idiot.” He told me that it was one of a kind and posed for a photo of him preparing to hit me in the head with it. I still have it today and it is my favorite autograph.
The autograph business was interesting and provided me with extra income as well as some fun memories. To mature as a Christian, many lessons must be learned. God was patient with me and helping me to grow. Mei Leng and I went out early one day and needed to stop at a small store. I was sleepy and wanted to get the shopping over with. When we got to the cash register, the Holy Spirit prompted me to share the good news with the cashier. Have you ever been guilty of not doing what God tells you to do? Mei Leng was preparing to pay when I made my way past her and went to the car. She seemed to be taking her sweet time, and I was getting a little impatient. When I looked back at the store, I could see Mei Leng talking to her. The Holy Spirit made it known to me that if I didn’t feel like doing what needed to be done, he would find someone else. Every single person is important to God. I waited in the car for quite some time and finally made a decision. Sharing God’s word with someone in need was a better choice than waiting in the car while someone else did it.

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While God was helping me to grow spiritually, my kids were growing physically. Terrell was nearly three and old enough to become a source of constant entertainment. I was sitting at the back of a restaurant in Bellingham eating lunch and Mei Leng was holding Nick because he was still quite little. Terrell took off for the front door, on his hands and knees, mooing like a cow. By the time I caught up with him he had nearly made it to the front door. His mom was embarrassed, but everybody else thought it was funny.

His finest moment may have been when we were on a short trip. My exit came up suddenly and when I looked in my mirror, there was a car about eighteen inches behind me. My wife said, “You just missed your exit”.

“I could not slow down because there was a guy right on my tail. I’ll take the next exit”, I explained.
It was quiet in the back seat for about fifteen minutes till I heard a small voice ask, “Mommy, does daddy have a tail?”

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I have had to find another way to show my happiness since God did not give me a tail I could wag. If I had one, I might not have been wagging it very much when I went to have some work done on my car. There was a pastor I recognized in the waiting room. Mei Leng and I had spoken at his church awhile back. We had a nice visit as we both had time to kill. I must admit I was a little stunned when he informed me of the congregation’s reaction to our testimonies. They told him that they thought it was not fair that we should go free after all the things we had done. I have to wonder if they understood what God wants from us. He wants us to acknowledge and stop doing wrong things (committing sins). He offers forgiveness freely to everybody. When we surrender ourselves to him and say I will do what you want me to do, then he’s happy. He receives no joy in punishing us and just wants us to do what’s right. Would a loving mom or dad enjoy punishing their child? I surrendered to the police so that I could receive my punishment. It was God who set me free because he could see the change in my heart. I was now doing what he told me to do in Psalm 107:2 “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.” I am not proud of my past and had gone to their church to tell them what a merciful and loving God I serve.

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After I was saved, I started praying for many people including my mother. In her later life, she attended church more often. The problem was that she considered it more of a social event than anything. She had never fully committed herself to serve God. One foot in the church and the other in the world never works. Family is always on the top of that pray list. When my brother was saved, he joined me in my prayers for her.
I received a phone call telling me that she had cancer. I flew home to be with her. Laying in that hospital, and knowing that her days were numbered, she asked God’s forgiveness. I believe God answered our prayers. That was the only way that I think my mother would get serious about her salvation. In God’s mercy, he allowed her to see her final days. Many people die quickly and have no time for deathbed repentance. It was not a long drawn out affair but was long enough for her to be saved before her death. I am thankful that God heard and answered our prayers.

***

The Gideons invited us to speak at a convention on Vancouver Island. As usual, they treated us like royalty and we had an enjoyable evening. It was our pleasure to meet the two Gideons who had given Mei Leng that testament long ago. I thank God for these willing servants who were there that day when we were in need. I pray for the Gideons and their work. Look at all that has happened from that one testament they gave Mei Leng. Isn’t that what God said in Isaiah 55:11? That His word would not return to him void.

A few years later, I grew homesick. We moved back to the U.S. Some people cannot decide where they want to live. We landed in North Carolina this time. We settled into a house and decided to stay still awhile for the sake of the kids. They did all the usual kids’ stuff while they were growing up. I gave Nick a used bike one year. He took it to the backyard and painted it white. He then proceeded to add red dots all over the bike and named it Chicken Pox.

I was teaching Nick about God’s plans for our future. I showed him Revelation 1:6 where it says “And hath made us kings and priests unto God.” I said, “God has tremendous things planned for his servants”. If he wanted to, he could make you a king and even give you a whole planet to take care of for him. Nick said, “A planet? Dad, I cannot even keep my bedroom clean”.

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One year we gave the kids a few dollars to buy gifts at Christmas. Nick came to me with my gift. It was a 4-inch tall action figure of a man wearing a robe and carrying a staff. As I was examining it, he said, “It’s Moses. They were all out of Jesus”.

We were all in the car getting ready to leave one day when Nick was about twelve years old. I grabbed the mail and handed it to my wife saying “Looks like you got a Victoria Secret catalog”. A voice from the back seat said, “That’s mine”.

I said, “No it ain’t”.

He said, “Yes it is”. Mei Leng looked at the address label and said, “Looks like he ordered it”.

***

A phone call from Terrell woke me up late one night. He asked if I could come and pick up him and Nick. They were a couple blocks from the house at the Home Owners Association’s pool; the police wanted me to come get them. I got dressed and went after my kids. Apparently, I was not the only parent to receive one of those calls. The policeman explained that the kids had climbed over the fence and were playing in the pool. The noise alerted a neighbor who called in a complaint. My kids had snuck out of the house to go swimming with some girls. The mother of the girls was angry and grounded them for the rest of the year. I took a different approach. I went to Wal-Mart and purchased the largest pool they had. I set it up in the backyard and told the kids to go swim. Word soon got around and a neighborhood kid came and said to me, “Mr. Burton, you sure aren’t like most parents.”

Let’s consider what had happened. My kids knew that if I woke up while they were gone, it would not be good. They knew that I would be extremely upset. Before they left, they decided to leave a note in their bedroom telling me where they were, just in case I woke up. Then two teenage boys snuck out to meet up with some girls. There were no drugs or alcohol involved. Everybody had their pants
on and they were just swimming. I say, “Thank God, my kids are normal!” That’s what normal teenage boys do. They want to be around girls. They were thoughtful of me and left a note in case I discovered them missing. I think I have the best kids in the world.

They may have been the best in the world, but they still ate like teenagers. As their hunger increased, I thought it best to try and increase my income. When an opening came up at a millworks company, I applied for the job. I got it. It was a large place with over one hundred employees. I learned about cabinetry and how to run some CNC machinery. I was always looking for ways to entertain myself and those around me when I noticed a pink slip of paper that was fastened to a time card by a paperclip. I saw that it was from a commonly available tablet that could be purchased at any stationary store. Each sheet of the tablet had a place to record a phone call. You could record who called, what time, a message and if they would call back, etc. Not wanting to waste an employee’s time, any calls he received would be recorded on a pink slip and clipped to his timecard. A quick trip to the local stationary store and I was in business. My first target was the shop foreman who was an older gentleman of about 60 years of age. His phone message was from a hospital in Raleigh, North Carolina who had called to inform him that the information he had requested regarding sex change surgery had been sent to his home address. My next target was a young man who had received a call from “The Loving Touch Massage Parlor. They called to warn him that if he did not bring his account up to date soon, that he would no longer be welcome there.

I remember telling one secretary that she and I could pick up some extra cash if she wanted to go along with my plan. She had a PA system and could page anybody in the building. I said I would sell “Celebrity calls” to the employees and split the money with her. The employee would give me $20.00, and she would announce the call over the PA system. Bob Dylan calling for Jim or Britney Spears on line two for Ralph. Unfortunately for me, her sanity prevailed, but I still think it could have been a profitable venture.
It was common for the Gideons to line up speaking engagements for us when we were in their area. Maybe we would speak at a Gideon convention on Saturday night and they would plan for a church or two the next morning. That might be followed by a visit to some nearby jail, etc. I was sharing my testimony on one of those jail trips. When I finished speaking, I asked if any of the four men present wanted to be saved. All four said yes. One of the Gideons then suggested that we all hold hands. I almost panicked. I could see that one of the four was an outcast from the others. I quickly moved between him and the others to hold hands. We prayed, and God changed some lives. Four people asked Christ into their lives that day and I am thankful the Gideons invited me along.

***

As I have indicated before the Gideons have always been extremely kind and generous to us. Two high ranking officials asked us if we could go to New Orleans and speak at their international convention. We have never turned down a request from them. We agreed to go. Soon after we were asked if we would like to remain there for a week and act as chaperones to the youth group. They gave us expenses and a deluxe hotel suite for a week. I think it was highly unlikely that the youth group needed another two chaperones. It was the Gideons’ way of giving us a vacation. I spoke for about 3,500 people from around the world. I love telling people about my God and the things he has done for me. During the week we rode a riverboat up the Mississippi River to The Audubon Zoo. It was beautiful with 2,000 animals housed on 58 acres. Mei Leng and I had never had a vacation together and this was a generous thing to do for us. I found out that those two Gideons had paid for most of this out of their own pockets. Although we thanked them profusely, they may never know how much it meant to us. We thank God for the friends he has blessed us with.
CHAPTER 23

Sorry Andrew

Remember me saying that I thought being a Christian meant I would have to give up everything and spend the rest of my days being bored to death. Nothing could be further from the truth. God blessed us with a wonderful vacation. I have never enjoyed my life so much till I put Christ in charge of it. He always knows what I need, even when I do not. Things do not always go perfectly, but he is always there to help me with anything and everything. The world often thinks that serving God means a dull, empty life like I once did. An opportunity to share the gospel message with someone is a highlight in my life. To see someone accept Christ into their life is a cherished memory. Someone’s salvation is something I take seriously. God wants us to enjoy our life and I’m doing that. God put joy and peace in me and now I find many things to laugh about instead of being angry at everything. I see and take many opportunities to make others laugh and enjoy life. It is possible that sometimes I shock even the best of my friends.

Andrew and Jennifer are a young couple I met at work. They were fun to be around and I invited them over for dinner. Once again my urge to entertain got the best of me. Twenty minutes before their arrival, I texted and said I had forgotten to inform them that we were nudists. I took off my shirt and held a bath towel in front of me when I opened the door. I said, “You can leave your clothes on if it makes you feel more comfortable.” The good news is they have forgiven me and we are still friends.
Anybody I work with is fair game to me as George might tell you. I took another job operating CNC equipment. It was a hundred thousand dollar machine that sharpened saw blades. The foreman of the shop was named George. When you sharpen saw blades, it is necessary to use caution so as not to inhale the dust from the carbide. Breathing in this dust can cause nosebleeds. George had worked there for years, and occasionally he would get a nosebleed that he could not get to stop. This happened one day and I volunteered to take him to an emergency clinic. There was a big counter in the center with chairs going around three sides like a horseshoe shape. By the time we got there, George was covered in blood. He looked like Mohamed Ali had used him as a punching bag. They took him in a room to work on him. He still looked pretty rough when they brought him out about thirty minutes later. There were many people in the waiting room. I stood up on the other side of the room and with a louder voice than necessary said “Good news George, your wife called and said you can come back home now if you’ve learned to keep your mouth shut.” Everybody was laughing while I thought it’s a good thing George is not licensed to carry.

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A woman, my wife, knew was leading an aerobics class once a week at a female youth detention center. She asked if Mei Leng would mind filling in for her on occasion. I think it was a real chore to find a replacement when she needed one. These were girls were too young to send to prison. They were in for all kinds of crimes from robbery to murder. Obviously my wife would not be easily intimidated by the clientele. Mei Leng filled in for a few classes and was soon asked if she wanted to take over permanently. She agreed to take the class. In return for leading the class, the detention center allowed her to spend some of her own time with the girls.

Mei Leng had spoken to Chaplain Ray about the ministry. He sent her some of the Christian books he distributed in the various prisons. She passed these out to the girls as well as some new Testaments from
the Gideons. After an aerobics class, the girls were tired enough to sit and listen to Mei Leng’s Bible classes. She shared her own story of what God had done in her life. God gave her favor with the girls, and they could easily relate to what she said.

A girl named Bonnie was the most hardcore of the group. The detention center had not found her to be the easiest inmate to care for. On the wall was a checklist of sit-ups, push-ups, etc. followed by the record number of each. She pointed to the wall and informed Mei Leng that she held those records. It doesn’t matter how strong you are; God is stronger. After a few classes the Holy Spirit moved upon Bonnie, and when Mei Leng asked if anyone wanted to be saved that week, her hand went up. The Bible says, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved”. Romans 10:9-10. They prayed together, and God performed a miracle. She was a changed person.

Mei Leng was home and soon got a call from the detention center. The guard calling said, “What did you do to Bonnie?”

Mei Leng asked, “What’s the matter with Bonnie? Is something wrong?”

The guard said, “No, nothing’s wrong, but she’s changed, she’s different”. Mei Leng tried to explain that the girl had asked God for forgiveness and now she is going to serve Him. Some people would say, “She got saved.” The guard asked, “But what did you say to her? What did you tell her to make her act that way?” I am reminded of the time Jesus healed a blind man. The world could see what God had done but could not understand, no matter what they were told. It was a religious group known as the Pharisees. They called the previously blind man before them again to ask the same questions he had already answered. John 9:26. “Then said they to him again, what did he to thee? How opened he thine eyes?”
A short while later Mei Leng received a phone call from another guard at the detention center. He said he had been listening to her class and when she asked if anyone wanted to be saved, he did. He prayed there at the time but did not say anything about it because he was at work and did not want everyone to know. He wanted her to know that he too had accepted Christ as his Savior. He started attending church. God is amazing.

***

We have had some phenomenal experiences observing God at work during our travels. One astonishing evening took place when our driver delivered us late to an intercity church in Detroit. When we opened the back door and was greeted by an usher, it was immediately obvious that the worship service had already started. The music filled the place and we could hear the sound of people praising God. The usher directed me through the basement and up steps to a door that opened onto the platform. When I opened the door that was a few feet from the pastor, I was nearly knocked down. It was like stepping in front of God’s throne. The Holy Ghost fell on me in such a powerful manner that I could hardly stand. The spirit rose in me and I began worshiping and praying in tongues the very instant that I opened that door. The power of God was overwhelming as I staggered toward my seat beside the pastor.

I long for the day when I will have permanent access to God’s throne. To be able to feel his presence and worship without earthly restraints. It is possible to make only the feeblest attempts to describe his presence with my limited vocabulary. There is nothing I have encountered in my short seventy years to compare it to.

During the altar call for salvation, the pastor motioned to a woman praying, with tears in her eyes, and said, “I know her. She’s a heroin addict.” I believe she’s a former heroin addict now. If we are willing to share the things God has done in our life, we will see people saved. We just need to make an effort and he will act upon it. Living our life as instructed, is also a witness to the world. The Bible says,
“Ye are the light of the world.” (Matthew 5:14) And again “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16) You and I have no way of knowing who may be watching our life. It might be your auto mechanic.

***

My friend told me about a guy who had his own garage and did auto repair. I started taking my car to him because he did good work and always gave me a reasonable price. He would attempt to tell me his off-color jokes and I would tell him where I had been speaking and what God had accomplished. The Bible indicates that a man speaks about what is in his heart. (Luke 6:45) God forgave me and has such wonderful plans for me that I have trouble keeping all that to myself. Basically, I always thought that my mechanic never heard a word I said. You can imagine how absolutely flabbergasted I was when he told me he had become a Christian. He had put God in charge of his life. He said he was greatly influenced by me. Me? What had I done? God used my Christian life as a tool to reach out to this man. God was speaking to his heart saying, what I have done for Ken, I can also do for you. Thank God for what he did in that man’s life.
CHAPTER 24

Happy and I Ain’t Never Going Back

One of my favorite foods is spaghetti with meat sauce. We all have had experiences with dinner guests who do not arrive at the appointed time. If spaghetti is the main menu item, then this type of guest can present a problem. Spaghetti is best if not cooked ahead of time, but just before it is to be served. However, it takes a long time to bring a sufficient quantity of water to a boil so you can start cooking. The best way to circumvent this obstacle is to preheat the water and turn it to simmer. When those insensitive guests arrive, simply turn the water to high, and it will be boiling almost immediately. My life was like that preheated water on simmer. On the inside, I was always filled with frustration, hatred, and anger. It took so little to cause me to go from simmer to boiling over because I was always preheated. Boiling with rage is a dangerous place to live. How many regrettable acts have been committed in a state of rage? A large number of people are behind bars at this moment because of uncontrollable anger. When I accepted the gift of salvation from Christ Jesus and made a commitment to serve him, I also asked him for help in my life. He replaced my frustration with an “I know I can do it with his help” attitude. In place of hatred, he gave me a genuine love for other people. He also took away that hair-trigger temper by turning off simmer. Since I am no longer preheated, I am now slow to become angry like he instructs us in James 1:19. I find it easy to laugh now at situations when I would have previously become enraged.
For the 10 years, I was a fugitive, I was filled with anger and hatred, living in fear, and running for my life. Few people could understand the torment I suffered as a fugitive. The Bible says “Fear hath torment” (1 John 4:18). The police were everywhere I turned making the threat to my life and freedom real on a daily basis. Shooting it out with the police or being cornered by them was a common nightmare. Instead of peace, my life was in constant turmoil just like His word said. “There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked” (Isaiah 48:22). God brought peace to my life after I acknowledge the error of my ways.

According to God’s word, everybody has sinned. In Romans 3:23 it says "For all have sinned” It is generous on God’s part to say “I’ll take the rap for what you have done. That is to say that someone other than you and I will be punished for what we have done because of his love for us. That’s what is meant by John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.” What is needed is a confession like we read about in 1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." It is a gift. Why would anyone not want to confess their sins and receive it?

When I look back over my life, I stand amazed. There were many times that I received help at exactly the right moment. When I was eighteen, I was riding with a friend who was driving through the ghetto. He made a left turn in the path of a car traveling at an extreme rate of speed. The other driver hit my car door while I was holding a large knife. The police found me laying on the pavement near the curb. The cop, asked if I was a pedestrian. I informed him I had been in the car. He said something to the effect that I must not know what I was talking about because nobody came out of that mangled wreck. God must have spared my life that day because I should have died in that accident.

When I woke up on a park bench, I had no plan. Those two boys must have been sent to help, exactly when I needed help. A Retired
cop gave me money and advice on how to evade the law. He trusted me enough to show me his gun collection. He could have turned me in but did not. The Chicago police department placed me in the wrong cell with a desire to have me beaten. There was a possibility that I could have died in that cell. There is no question in my mind as to why I came out unharmed. Twice I walked in on drug busts without being captured. There was a Mountie that decided that he did not need to see my identification because I made wine. There was a patrolman in Toronto who had seen my mugshot but could not remember who I was. When the second patrolman failed to recognize me, they let me go. What are the odds that a taxi would arrive almost immediately in the middle of nowhere? If you look on a map, you will see that “The middle of nowhere” is not an exaggeration.

The Gideons had been hassled by the mall staff and told not to distribute their books. After some discussion, a compromise was reached. The Gideons were not to offer the Testaments to people passing by. They could leave the books on the table for anyone who asked for one. All this took place a few minutes before Mei Leng picked up a New Testament. God had been calling me to repentance for as long as I can remember. He spared my life and helped me many times over the years. God finally got me to the place where he wanted me. When I was ready to read his word and seek after him, the devil fought against it. The devil did not want me to have that New Testament and tried to stop me from receiving it.

God has continued working in my life and will do so till I die. I am a little better at listening now. When God saved me I knew immediately, he wanted me to turn my back on sin and learn more about him by reading the Bible. He has given instructions for almost everything we may encounter in life. His plans for our future are so exciting that sometimes I just want to shout “Praise God” and jump up and down. Surrendering to God is a life-changing experience, and no part of it is boring. It is hard to understand how anybody could refuse the wonderful offer that God makes us. I have been forgiven, and I am going to see him some glorious day.
TO
Kenneth Burton
718 Louisa
Flint, Michigan

FROM
T. BOICE PURDY
Attorney at Law
209 E. FIFTH STREET
FLINT, MICH. 48503
TELEPHONE 234-5607

August 5, 1970

RE: People vs. Kenneth Burton

Dear Mr. Burton:

This is to notify you that the trial in the above entitled cause is scheduled for September 22, 1970, at 8:30 a.m., in the Genesee County Circuit Court, Flint, Michigan.

You must be present in Court at the above time.

Please come into my office approximately two weeks prior to trial, so that we can go over your case and be prepared. We must have your witnesses ready for that date.

I also must receive payment of my attorney fees prior to that date.

Respectfully yours,

T. Boice Purdy

TBP:jes
Mr. Kenneth L. Burton  
411 Lyon Street, Suite 36  
Flint, Michigan 48503  

Canadian Consulate General  
Immigration Section  
600 Renaissance Center  
Suite 1100  
Detroit, Michigan 48243-1704  

November 26, 1987  

Dear Sir/Madam:  

As my circumstances are quite unusual, I thought this letter would be in order.  

In the year 1970 I was brought to trial for sale of an illegal narcotic (to wit: one teaspoon marijuana). In an attempt to avoid prosecution, I fled to Canada where I stayed for ten years. During that time, I accepted whatever work was available, moved frequently and lied about my identity.  

After ten years, I received a New Testament from the Gideons International in Canada; soon afterwards, I became a Christian. I quickly realized as a Christian I could no longer be dishonest. I surrendered myself to the R.C.M.P. in Burnaby, B.C.; I willingly answered all their questions pertaining to my activities during the ten year period. Eventually I was deported.  

Then I proceeded to face up to the results of my past life in the U.S. I made my way back to Flint, Michigan, where I had been originally charged and surrendered myself.  

Eventually I was resentenced and given three years probation (which was dropped to two years).  

The letters of character reference in my file attest to the things which I have stated herein.  

I would be very happy to further explain any area you need to have made clearer. I thank you for your consideration.  

Sincerely,  

Kenneth L. Burton  

KB/mb
August 16, 1984

Canadian Consulate,
To whom this may concern,

RE: Kenneth L. Burton
Character reference

As pastor in the City of Flint, State of Michigan, for over thirty years, I have known Kenneth Burton since 1953. For a period beginning about 1959 I did not see Kenneth until his return to Flint in August of 1980.

He contacted me and informed me of his past difficulties. I accompanied him when he appeared before our courts and was with him in all of the court hearings. The judge consulted with me regarding Kenneth Burton. I also met his probation officer, Robert Standall.

In October of 1980, I married Kenneth to a Canadian, née Marion Low. He and his wife have been very active members in our church. They are also very busy in the work of the Gideons International and hold elected offices in the same.

Kenneth has been active in the community donating time, money and efforts to help others. He has worked several hours as a volunteer renovating on church property.

The character of Kenneth Burton is that of a true God fearing, Bible living Christian.

As for my standing, I am an Ordained Minister of Pentecostal Church of God of America.

Yours truly,

[Signature]

Rev. Lester Gray
Pastor
CENTRAL ASSEMBLY

lg/mb
September 17, 1984

To Whom It May Concern,

I am the Neighborhood Foot Patrol assigned by the Flint Police Department to patrol the area in which Kenneth and Marion Burton reside, at 411 Lyon Street, Apartment #36.

It has been my pleasure to become acquainted and work with the Burton's in their community. The Burton's are outstanding community leaders in their civic activities as well as very responsible in their employment as apartment managers.

If I can be of any further service to you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Officer Bruce Sepanak
233-5801
GENESEE COUNTY ADULT PROBATION DEPARTMENT

CIRCUIT JUDGES
Odie B. Bivins, Jr.
Earl E. Borsdale
Philip C. Elliott
Donald R. Freeman
Harry B. McIra
Robert M. Ramsom
Thomas C. Yeolis

November 13, 1981

Re: Kenneth L Burton

Dear Sirs:

On October 8, 1980, Mr. Burton was placed on Circuit Court Probation for a period of three years, under the direct supervision of this writer. Since our initial meeting, Mr. Burton has always presented himself in a gentlemanly manner with an excellent attitude. He has been fully cooperative and has abided by the stipulations of his Probation without fail. It is this writer’s opinion that Mr. Burton is well along the way to becoming a viable, productive member of this community.

This man has exhibited characteristics of honesty, reliability, and punctuality. It is felt that Mr. Burton poses no threat whatsoever to this or any other community.

Mr. Burton married an ex-Canadian resident, Marion Low, and they currently reside in the Flint area.

Mr. and Mrs. Burton have brought to this writer’s attention their attempts to secure visiting privileges into Canada. They have always kept this writer fully aware of their contacts with United States and Canadian Immigration authorities.

During the past year, Mr. Burton has been actively involved with the Pentecostal Church of God, and under requirement of this writer, he has performed over 300 hours of volunteer service work. Throughout his probationary period, Mr. Burton has remained totally free of negative contacts with law enforcement officials, and it is this writer’s opinion that Mr. Burton will never again be involved in illegal activities.

This officer welcomes any further inquiries regarding Mr. and Mrs. Burton.

Sincerely,

Leonard Press
Chief Probation Officer

Robert W. Standal, Jr.
Probation Officer
Appendix

Senesee County Friend of the Court

Robert W. Standal, Sr.

To whom this may concern,

June 10, 1986

This letter is written on behalf of Kenneth Burton for the purpose of re-entry to Canada for visiting privileges.

I have known Kenneth Burton since 1981, shortly after his return to the Flint area. I am familiar with Ken's previous arrest record as a result of my position as a special Deputy Sheriff for the Genesee County Friend of the Court Office. Also, I have talked with Ken extensively about his past. Over the years Ken has become a good friend, a very trusted friend, and someone whom I have confidence in as a law abiding citizen.

If further information or assistance is desired, please do not hesitate to write or phone me. I may be reached during the day at my office or in the evening at home (313-694-3962).

Sincerely,

[Signature]

O. Drew Pitts
Special Deputy Sheriff

ODP: mb

GENESEE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
1101 BEACH STREET, SUITE 111, FLINT, MICHIGAN 48502-1474
OFFICE HOURS 8:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M. WEEKLY PHONE (313) 257-3300

171
August 25, 1984

To The Canadian Consulate

Re: Kenneth L. Burton

Gentlemen:

I have been advised by Mr. Kenneth Burton that he is applying for permission to return to Canada for visiting purposes. He has asked me to provide a character reference, which I am most pleased to do.

I have known Ken for several years, and have found him to be a very honest, dependable, reliable, trustworthy Christian. He has told me of his previous difficulties with the law, but I can unqualifiedly state that his conduct in recent years causes me to have no doubt of his outstanding character.

Thus, I would respectfully submit that Ken Burton be given permission to return to Canada for visiting purposes.

Sincerely,

Dennis L. Runyan
Federal Administrative Law Judge

DLR: jas
APPENDIX

STATE OF MICHIGAN
THE CIRCUIT COURT

PETITION FOR DISCHARGE FROM PROBATION

DEFENDANT
BURTON, KENNETH

JUDGE
Harry B. Mcara P 17254

PROBATION AGENT
Robert W. Standal, Jr.

DOCKET NO. COUNTY OFFENSE DATE OF PROB. PROB. TERM
70 Genesee Illegal Sale Of Narcotic Drugs 10/6/80 3 yrs.

Now comes the above named probation agent being so designated by this court, having principal charge of the probationer above named, who was placed on probation by this court on the date and for the period above stated. Said probation agent respectfully petitions this court that said probationer be discharged from probation for the following reasons:

1. He has made an excellent adjustment and no further supervision is deemed necessary.

2. He has paid Court Costs of $600.00 in full.

A TRUE COPY
Michael J. Carr, Clerk

ORDER OF PROBATION DISCHARGE

It appearing to the satisfaction of this Court that said probationer should be discharged from probation supervision and any unfulfilled obligations or conditions of said probation heretofore imposed by this Court, the same is hereby ordered and a judgement of suspended sentence is entered in said cause in accordance with the statute in such case made and provided.

HARRY B. MCARA
P-17254

ORDER OF PROBATION DISCHARGE

CIRCUIT JUDGE 11-26-82
The Gideons International

The Gideons International is an Association of Christian business and professional men and their wives dedicated to telling people about Jesus and providing Bibles and New Testaments.

We distribute God’s Word to police, fire, and medical personnel; prisoners; military personnel; students in the fifth grade and above; and to those with whom they interact on a daily basis. Scriptures are also placed in key locations, including hotels, motels, hospitals, convalescent homes, medical offices, domestic violence shelters, prisons, and jails.

People are often led to faith in Christ by the profound truths discovered in His Word. By reading and studying the Bible, these individuals grow in their walk and, eventually, share their testimony with others. For this reason, we focus on distributing complete Bibles, New Testaments, or portions thereof.

The Gideons International began distributing the Word of God in 1908. Today, there are more than 270,000 Gideons and Auxiliary – and an untold number of supporters – in 200 countries, territories, and possessions across the globe. We print in over 95 languages.

The distribution of our first billion Scriptures by Gideon members spanned 93 years (1908 to 2001). Distribution of our second billion, however, was completed in just 13 years (2002-2015). On average, more than two copies of God’s Word are distributed per second and over one million Bibles and New Testaments are distributed every four days. We have placed and distributed more than 2 billion Bibles and New Testaments around the world.
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The new birth is a new creation from above, the direct operation of the Word of God and the Spirit of God upon your life, changing you completely when you truly repent and turn to God. This is brought about in the following manner:

1st - Recognize that you are a sinner and lost, without God and without hope.

2nd - Admit that Jesus Christ died on the cross to save you from sin by His own precious blood.

3rd - Come to God repenting of your sins and turning away from all sin, and you shall be born again; that is, the Holy Spirit will then definitely make you a new creature, cleansing you from all sin by the authority of the Word of God and by the blood of Christ that was shed to atone for your sins.

4rd - You must believe from the heart when you confess with the mouth that God does forgive you of your sins and that He does cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

Scriptures for your authority to confess and believe are the following:

"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name"

(John 1:12-13)
"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"  
(John 6:37)

"Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life’  
(John 3:14-21, 36; 5:24)

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation ... For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"  
(Rom. 1:16 through Romans 10:9-13)

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out"  

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast"  
(Ephesians 2:1-10)

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"  
(1 John 1:9)