

Chapter 4

Anchored

beginning on June 20, 1960
and continuing for 3 years, 5 months, and 1 day

*“Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.
(Psalm 119:11)”*

For Chris Alan Foreman childhood lingered while maturity lagged. Eileen once told me that after rearing their first four kids, my parents were fatigued. As children number five and six, Frank and I were innocents, chaperoned by three older sisters and amused by our own company. I see maturity dawning with two transformational events. First, I was anchored in faith through my baptism into the Christian Church and, second, I was molded in character by my participation in the Boy Scouts of America.

The First Church of Christ loomed large in my upbringing. In this particular Protestant denomination, the two ordinances of scripture played a dominant role. My church served communion every Sunday morning, and my dad being an elder, distributed the wafers and juice. My church also held a legalistic view of baptism. We preached baptism as requisite to salvation. That is, if a believer were not baptized, he could not gain eternal life.

I remember once asking a Sunday school teacher, “So if some guy is walking into the baptismal, slips on a banana peel, bumps his head, and dies, then is he going to hell, because he didn’t make it those last few steps?” The adult suggested a future interview with the minister.

It was not such legalism that attracted me to the gospel. Rather, it was the loving example of my parents, the robust hymns of the congregation, and the simple preaching of Mister Thickers, which led me to Christ.

I continually observed my parents as living out their faith. They were not perfect, but neither were they hypocrites. They did not use profane language; there was never liquor in the house; they did not abuse their children; and dad and mom seldom quarreled in front of us. They welcomed the downtrodden into our midst and lived an unpretentious lifestyle. Their integrity won me over.

Hymn singing reached into my soul at a level I did not fathom at the time. I remember my mother singing from the hymnal, “There is joy in serving Jesus” and my dad booming out “On Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand.” These Biblical notions transmitted by song stuck in my ears and migrated to my heart.

The chorus of *Blessed Assurance* goes, “This is my story. This is my song. Singing His praises all the day long.” These lyrics lodged with me to spring out years later during a season of rebellion. At a later time of intense grief, I instinctively held up my arms and whispered the hymn, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty. Early in the morning my song shall rise to thee”. Even decades later I continue to enjoy congregational hymns that I first heard in pre-adolescence.

Mister Thickens preached every Sunday. His official title was “mister” not “reverend” or “pastor”. His messages were as unpretentious as his designation. The Gospel was boldly proclaimed and Scripture was simply expounded. The message was always evangelical: “Come to Jesus and be saved”. He offered an altar call after every service. I really liked Mister Thickens and I was sad to see him return to his native Australia. George Davis was his successor. He was okay, but it wasn’t the same.

June 1960

My fifteen-year-old sister, Eileen, had been to church camp a few summers already. I had made the drive with family down to Cedar Lake to pick her up, walk the grounds, and wade into the alga-filled water. Now at ten years old, it was my turn to experience Christian camp life. Our theme song went:

“Way down at Cedar Lake in Indiana, there is a camp that is the champ of all we know. That’s what we’re here for, we’re here to cheer for. The land is great to learn and play and pray and grow. Good food we eat here. Good friends we meet here as we sit around the campfire glow. There’s story, song, and fun until the day is done, down at the camp that is the champ of Indiana!” clap-clap clap-clap-clap

We sang that ditty in the dining hall three times a day before we rushed to the chow line.

I resided in a cabin with three small rooms. Each room contained two bunk beds housing four boys. The twelve of us composed the Red Team. My cabin-mates were age ten, eleven, and twelve, so I was among the youngest. There were three other cabins like ours; Blue, Green, and Gold.

Teams were awarded points for sports. I wanted to compete in baseball but my skills were minimal. Led by older kids, the Red Team won second place. I sat on the bench and felt useless. Teams also got points for citizenship (keeping clean and staying out of trouble). I think three of the four teams got perfect scores on that measure. Finally, a team could earn points through Bible knowledge. The camp director entered each cabin and quizzed each camper. I astounded my teammates by casually chanting all sixty-six books of the Bible, then adding for good measure the twelve apostles:

“Jesus called them one-by-one, Peter, Andrew, James and John.
Then came Phillip, Thomas too, Mathew, and Bartholomew.
James the one they called the Less, Simon, also Thaddeus.
Twelfth apostle Judas made. Jesus was by him betrayed.”

I was the Red Team hero and we won first prize during the award ceremony held on Saturday.

However, first prize was not the highlight of my five days at Cedar Lake. Rather, it was my “going forward” and my profession of faith in Christ. The story goes like this: On Friday afternoon, all forty-eight boys were gathered by the lakeshore to listen to a “famous international evangelist”. I sat on the grassy sand in the back as this preacher strode to the front of the assembly. I couldn’t believe my eyes. I saw Mister Thickens!

I had been feeling guilty, because my desire was to be baptized by him, but he left the church before I could act on my desire. Now, my second chance appeared. When he announced the altar call, I stepped to the front and confessed to the world, “I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and I accept him as my personal Savior”. I wanted Mister Thickens to baptize me right then and there in the waters of Cedar Lake, but it wasn’t so to be. He was happy to see me and to rejoice with me. On the next afternoon he gave an envelope to my dad when he came to retrieve me.

I didn’t realize I had to attend classes before baptism, but that was the requirement. George Davis led the catechism for six weeks before the big event. I remember sitting with two adults and one other youth, listening to Mister Davis expound the faith. He taught my first Greek lesson. He said something like this: “The Greek Bible was originally written in capital letters with no spaces. Sometimes that made it hard to translate. Take this sentence for example.” He wrote on the chalk board: NOWHEREISTRUTH. “Does that say ‘Now here is truth’ or ‘Nowhere is truth?’”

At a morning church service on August 7, 1960, Mister Davis immersed me in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. I pledged my life to the one who spoke, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except by me.” Christ became my anchor and evermore would be.



Big Jim Walker served his four years in the Marine Corps and then returned with Charlotte to Whiting, living in an upstairs apartment on Brown Avenue. Charlotte attended church regularly and sat with our family. Little Jim played in the nursery.

I remember one Sunday when Jacky and I were “goofing off”. A touch led to a shove and suddenly my communion cup was spilled all over my lap. Mom turned to me with exasperation while Elder dad winced from the communion table up front. My saintly sister Charlotte rescued this blatant sinner. Without a word, she removed the tiny cup from my hand, poured half of her juice into it, then returned it to me with a smile. Could there be a better picture of grace?



School started up again in the Fall. This was my second semester with Mr. Thomas. The odd thing about being a mid-term was that in the Spring half-year older kids were my classmates while in the Fall half-year younger kids shared the classroom.

I still liked history and geography, but I must admit recess was my favorite period and Clark School provided a vast playground. The space was about one-third of the big school block and it was paved with uneven crumbling asphalt. Sprouts of grass shot through large cracks. There were two baseball backstops in opposite corners, and two basketball hoops tucked in another. In early school years, I just ran around and chased other kids. In middle years we would play half-organized games like *Mother May I*, *Red Light Green Light*, and *Red Rover*. In fifth and sixth grade, we boys played a lot of softball, running the bases and occasionally breaking a school window. Frank was always more rambunctious than I was. Mom constantly patched the knees of his school trousers.

I would sometimes hang out with Jimmy Francis at the other end of the block. We would throw darts or play ping pong in his basement. In September of 1960, the Hitchcock movie, *Psycho*, was showing at the Hoosier Theater in downtown Whiting. Jim's dad really wanted to see it and thought it might educate his son. Jim asked me to tag along and we three sat in the theater together. At the time, *Psycho* was one of the few movies that required kids under twelve to be accompanied by an adult. I thought the movie was really creepy, but couldn't understand the tedious psychological ending. Why was Norman Bates dressed like his mother? Why did he preserve her stinky body? Mr. Francis tried to explain Freud to us, but the mumbo-jumbo was beyond my understanding.

After following baseball for the entire summer, snipping out and saving the Major League Standings, the World Series was finally at hand. The New York Yankees were again favorites, but Frank and I were rooting for the National League pennant winners, the underdog Pittsburgh Pirates. I listened to every moment of every game. The Yankees would score a lop-sided win, then the Pirates would squeak by the next game by one run. 1960 remains the World Series year in which the losing team outscored the winning team by the largest margin—Yankees 53 to Pirates 27—and the only series in which the last batter in the seventh game, in the ninth inning, smacked a come-from-behind home run. That was Bill Mazoroski. It could not have been more thrilling for a ten-year old boy.

Nancy Jo Zelen, my third niece, arrived just as the World Series was beginning. Chubby Checker sang to her the number one song, *The Twist*.

Just like October, November became a month that stirred my partisan passions. Richard M. Nixon and John F. Kennedy were vying for president of the United States. In my Catholic environs, most of my school mates were campaigning for Kennedy. My dad had picked up Republican pins at the Masonic lodge, and provided me with Nixon-Lodge buttons for school. I also wore a badge that read, "Pat for First Lady". I remember Protestant concerns that Catholic Kennedy would "construct a special pipeline of holy water running from Rome all the way to Washington, D. C."

While neighbors were celebrating on November eighth, my family was lamenting. Nixon had lost and dad suggested the Pope would now rule over America.

My father had been scoutmaster of Whiting troop number 103 for four years. He took on this role to influence Jack in a positive direction. Don Zelen acted as dad's assistant and Jack's personal mentor. I did participate in Cub Scouts for a short while, but dad did not care for the den mother nor did he like her craft-centered program.

My eleventh birthday fell on a Saturday. On Sunday I received a birthday/Christmas present of a complete Boy Scout uniform and on Monday, December 26, I attended my first Boy Scout meeting. Dad had prepped me ahead of time and on this first day I passed all the requirements for my Tenderfoot badge.

1961

When I returned to school in January, I was in sixth grade. Miss Alison was my new teacher. Two things stand out in my memory. One morning, it was my turn to present something for show and tell. I was not prepared. Television was probably the culprit.

I had read in the *Boy's Life* magazine an article that had caught my eye. It was about the year 1961 being an "upside down year", that is, you turned the digits upside down and it still read 1961. That anomaly impressed me. So, just a few moments before it was my turn to present, I grabbed a marker and paper and wrote out "1-9-6-1". When my turn came, I held up the paper, explained the concept, and turned the paper upside down. I mentioned the last such year occurred in 1881 and the next would not happen until 6009. Miss Alison was impressed and gave me a blue star.

1961 also marked the centennial of the American Civil War. The commemoration was on the news and in our curriculum. Over the next few years, I made several reports about the War between the States, all the way up to April 1965 and the centennial remembrance of Lincoln's assassination.

At the urging of Eileen, I began writing in a diary on January first, 1961. Each day of writing was allotted three lines. Most entries included a ball score, a TV show, a friend who visited, and the high and low temperature of the day. My two juvenile diaries record exact days when life events occurred, but I was not mature enough to share my inner life. However, by writing daily for two and a half years, I did exhibit perseverance.

Boy Scouts became a gigantic part of life for two full calendar years—1961 and 1962. I was attending meetings every Monday, advancing up the ranks, hiking, camping, and earning merit badges. I was proud to wear my scout uniform and give the three-fingered salute. I took to heart the scout oath I recited as a tenderfoot:

“On my honor, I promise to do my best to do my duty to God and my country, to obey the scout law, to help other people at all times, to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight.”

The scout law ran: “a scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.” Our motto was “do a good turn daily” and our slogan “be prepared.” Certainly, virtue was being communicated. I was mature enough to grasp the concepts, but not enough to uphold the standards.

Just as I was entering the Scout ranks, Jack was exiting. His eighteenth birthday loomed and he would soon age out. Dad was frantic because Jack was one merit badge short of his Eagle Scout award. Mom offered her entire month’s paycheck if Jack would just focus. Finally, dad found a solution. There was an obscure merit badge called “automobiling”. All Jack had to do was possess a valid driver’s license, take the tester for a drive, and answer a few automotive questions. So, Jack gave Don Zelen a drive in the family car, earned his final merit badge, and had his papers signed two days before his birthday. Jack was past eighteen when dad presented him with the award in a Court of Honor.

My older brother was an enigma to me. While five siblings were compliant, he was a contrarian. He once bragged to Eileen that he was drunk most of his senior year. Jack graduated in June of 1961—just barely. His grades were bad and his attitude worse. He had to take summer make-up classes and he never considered advancing to college.

His saving grace was a love of books. He would read novels late into the night. Frank claims it was a youthful reading of J. D. Salinger that planted a rebellious seed in his heart. Maybe so. I did hear him remark that *Catcher in the Rye* was his favorite book ever. Maybe Jack did identify with the disillusionment of Holden Caulfield and perhaps he did acquire a contempt for the phoniness of the world.

My 1961 diary notes a few memorable events. On March 20, Jimmy Francis and I bought a magnifying glass at Star Sales. After our purchase, I remember the elderly clerk asking if we planned to play detectives. Jimmy shot back, “No, we plan to focus the sun on the tail end of ants and watch them explode.”

On April 11, I noted, “Today the U.S.S.R. got the first man in space.” And on April 21, I wrote “Today we got a new 1961 push-button Chevrolet station wagon for \$3,500.”

I also noted a fight I lost to Bobby Wetnight. He was Jacky’s older brother. I remember Bobby pinning me down on the grass with his knees on my shoulders, just laughing in my face while I flailed. I got so furious; I began cussing at him. This was out of character for me, but I knew a few bad words from the school yard. Bobby said, “if you keep cussing like that, I’m going to tell your dad”. I kept up my string of expletives and he did tell my father.

The next day I recall the only full dressing down I ever received. Dad and mom summoned me into their bedroom where I stood at attention in front of a poster board that spelled out ten reasons why a young man should not use profanity. Dad made me read each line out loud, made me promise to apologize to Bobby, and never use that kind of language again. And with a few lapses, I have held to that promise.

I took swim classes at the Whiting community center every week of the year to earn my swimming and lifesaving merit badges. Although I was big and strong, I was not coordinated. The various strokes did not come easily. For my lifesaving badge I had to dive into the deep end of the pool and retrieve a shotput from the depths.

On June 25, I attended my first Boy Scout summer camp. Located along the St. Joseph River, Camp Betz was sixty miles northeast in Berrien Springs, Michigan. During my seven days of tent living, I earned merit badges in Rowing, Canoeing, Woodworking, and Conservation. I remember nightly bonfires, hordes of mosquitos, scorching temperatures, and bug juice/Kool-Aide with lunch. I noticed something about myself that continues to this day. I did enjoy being away from home, but I preferred the solitude of the woods or the quiet of a solo canoe, to the antics of rambunctious pre-teens.

Jack worked as a camp counselor that summer but resented every moment because dad “made him do it”. My big brother moved into our basement earning pocket change by setting pins at the bowling alley.

Sandy Patrick was Jack’s girlfriend. She worked at the Conrad Hilton Hotel in the Windy City and on a few occasions drove Frank and me to Chicago museums. I remember buying an odd assortment of educational gifts like rock samples glued to cardboard and a conch seashell.

In August, the Zelens drove south on a summer vacation. They were kind enough to take along Frank and me. I remember driving to Mammoth Cave in Kentucky and to the Great Smokey Mountains. We wore shorts, camped under stars, ate hot dogs, swam in lakes, bought cheap souvenirs, and mailed home post cards. Jeanne treated us just like she did her own children, Debbie and Susie. Don felt half way between my big brother and my dad.

When school started up in the Fall, I was a *boy* three times over. First of all, I was a *Boy Scout*. Second, I got my first job working for “*Boy Carriers*.” I rolled about two-hundred flat advertising papers into the shape of a thick baton, wrapped each in a rubber band, then tossed them onto my neighbors’ porches. My area of responsibility covered six blocks. I worked once a week for a few hours. I earned three dollars for each delivery, not bad for kid of eleven. Third, I was a patrol *boy* at Clark School. I got to wear a white patrol belt across my chest and help younger kids across the street. I felt empowered.

Miss Welsh was my final teacher in elementary school. She was stern and I remember learning a lot of grammar—verbs/nouns, subject/object. I also learned about yo-yos. All the guys seemed to pull them from their pockets. Of course, I joined the Duncan yo-yo crowd. There was the basic wooden model for twenty-five cents, the butterfly for fifty cents, and the imperial for a dollar. I wasn't very adept. I could make the yo-yo go up and down, sleep for a few seconds, and sometimes do around the world. For a year or so, yo-yos were the craze at Clark.

Frank and I were still big fans of Major League Baseball and the captivating news of 1961 was the homerun battle between Micky Mantle and Roger Maris. Both were trying to beat the sixty homers hit by Babe Ruth in 1927. By August, the sports page was running the daily numbers for the "M&M Boys". Maris won this race and on the final day of the season belted his sixty-first home run. We were not pleased that the Yankees won yet another World Series.

Over Thanksgiving our family drove the new station wagon to Columbus, Ohio, where Uncle Stutz taught ROTC at Ohio State University. He treated the family to a college football game. Dad was in his element, but I couldn't figure out what was going on. I knew baseball well, but all I saw on the football field was a bunch of big-shouldered guys bumping their heads together and falling down.

I was introduced to basketball at the end of 1961. I was recruited mid-season to play for the sixth grade Pioneers. I wore the official shirt and shorts as I shuffled around the gym. I didn't know much, but I was taller than most. I remember playing the parochial schools. We lost to Saint John, beat Immaculate Conception, then in December lost to Saint Adalbert, 35 to 21. I was high scorer for that game with eight points.

My diary tells me that for my twelfth birthday, my parents gave me a tape recorder. For the life of me I can't remember a thing about it.

1962

With the new year came a new experience. Junior High School shocked my sheltered life. I was given a school locker with a combination; I earned letter grades: A to F; and my teachers stayed in one classroom while I rotated from teacher to teacher. It seemed so different and so grown up. In my woodshop class, fifteen-year-old boys who had flunked a few grades talked about what they did with girls. It was all news to me.

Miss Forsyth taught math (not arithmetic). We chanted the multiplication tables and mastered long division, no mercy from her. Miss Day—her face like a prune—seemed older than dirt. She had us reciting helping verbs: "Be, am, is, are, was, were, been; have, has, had; do, does, did;

shall, should, can, could, will, would, may, might, must.” Mr. Sandala taught geography, and Miss Frasier reading.

Boy Scouts continued to be a focus of my life. Troop 103 (now renumbered as Troop 230) met on Monday evening from six to seven in the Congregational Church basement. A big part of the meeting was the activity. I remember competing in four of them. For “Concentration” boys were numbered and sat in a circle. One would clap “*clap-clap-one-two*”. Two would return-clap, “*clap-clap-two-five*” and so on, until someone messed up and was eliminated. The last one sitting was the winner.

“Steal the Bacon” was a more active game. Half of the boys would line up against one wall and half against the other. A towel (bacon) was placed in the middle. When the leader yelled “one”, opposing boys assigned as one would dash to snatch the bacon and return to the wall before the other touched him. Boyhood energy was thus dissipated.

“Memory” consisted of a tablecloth draped over twenty household objects, then revealed for ten seconds. The scout who could remember the most objects was the winner. “Musical Chairs” was the fourth game but it required a record player.

A January event was called the *Klondike Derby*. As patrol leader of the Apaches, I led in building a snow sled from wood and painted it—of course dad assisted. Fathers would convey sleds to a nearby farm and scouts would spend one long Saturday racing our creations. Each boy would be required to stand in a sled while the rest pulled him along a winding course. It was great fun and we won gold nuggets, which turned out to be melted lumps of brass.

In February the city of Whiting sponsored a Boy Scout Day. I was chosen to be the *Judge* and got to sit in the actual chair of Judge Obermiller. I was supposed to preside over a mock case, but I was too bashful to say much.

Diary entries tell me that Frank was baptized on February 11 and on April 11 Shelley Ann Walker was born. *Johnny Angel* topped the pop charts sung by Shelley Fabares. I also made note of a new color television dad brought into the living room.

I was thrilled by that purchase. Now I could watch cartoons in their proper format. Decades later I wrote a story concerning my mother and that TV, calling it *Brown Paper Bag*.

One day after school I rushed home and plopped down in front of the TV. Mom was in the kitchen preparing the evening meal. Engrossed in cartoons, I heard her call out, “Chris, come in here. I need you for something.” I dutifully walked to the kitchen.

“Your dad’s coming home soon and I want to fix a salad, but we’re out of lettuce. I want you to go to the store and buy some lettuce for me.” She put a quarter in my hand and sent me to the corner grocery store.

I ran as fast as I could, not wanting to miss a bit of *Rocky and Bullwinkle*. I rushed past the counter and spotted the leafy round vegetable. I handed over the quarter waiting impatiently for change. Then I raced home in record time and quickly handed over the brown bag resuming my favorite pose.

My bliss was short lived. Again, my mom called out, “Chris, come over here”. Her eyes flashed, “This is not a lettuce. Can’t you even tell the difference between a cabbage and a lettuce?”

My lip trembled. Then I saw her anger melt into exasperation, and her exasperation into resignation. Finally came a sigh, then a smile. “Oh, well”, she said, “I guess your dad will have coleslaw for dinner.”

When I think about my mother, I think about her mercy. I think about her cheerful optimism; her ability to make the best of whatever emerged from her brown paper bag.”

As a Boy Scout I was in continual motion. I completed a twenty-mile hike on the Yellowwood Trail in central Indiana. I remember prancing to the finish line as adults panted behind me. My feet hurt, but I was a ball of energy. I earned my hiking merit badge a few weeks later.

In the summer I went to Camp Betz for the second time. I earned four more merit badges and completed the mile swim. The fifty laps were not supposed to be a competition for the ten boys in the pool, but without too much struggle, I managed to finish second. I sewed a patch to my swim trunks emblazoned with a sea horse.

Frank wasn’t yet eleven but dad pulled some strings and he was able to visit the pool. Word got out Frank was singing and dramatizing all the words to *Little Egypt* who “came out strutting wearing nothing but a button and a bow”. The teenage lifeguard bullied Frank into singing before he could hop in the pool. Frank was not a “happy camper”.

After Camp Betz, I was promoted to Life Scout, then Senior Patrol Leader. I was zipping through scouts in the fast lane.

In August, Frank, Eileen, and I went on a vacation with the Zelen Family. Berny Staley—their unofficial foster child—went along. It was a great four days at Warren Dunes in Michigan, running down sandy hills. I could accelerate to my maximum speed, then let myself tumble in the soft sand. Eileen and Berny were continually singing the top song of the summer, *Sherry*, by the Four Seasons.

Just before school started, Jimmy Francis acquired a new passion. Her name was Ellen Wood. I’d ask him, “What do you want to do today?”

He'd respond with a grin; "Let's walk over to Ellen's house."

We did this on several occasions. Sometimes she was home; sometimes not. When Ellen was away, we didn't want to waste the eight-block walk, so we would wander a few streets further and hang out around George Lake. The area was marshy and ringed by industry. A mountain of slag dumped by Union Carbide served as our playground. The artificial rocks were sharp and shiny.

One of our past times was to pick cat tails, dry them out, and then smoke them—that is, pretend to puff them like cigars. They produced an incense-like aroma. Our favorite drying bin was the attic of the Francis garage. Once we stuck dozens of cat tails above the ceiling rafters. This crawl space super-heated in the summer. Unfortunately, we forgot our stash and when we returned months later all we found were handfuls of messy brown fluff.

After a year of struggling at home, Jack decided that college was preferable to pin setting. He took special tests to gain admittance to Indiana University. With knowledge gained through book-reading, he passed the aptitude tests.

My parents drove him to Bloomington in September of 1962. I remember visiting his dingy basement boarding room. After a semester of classes, he drifted home and for several months lurked in the basement, aimless and depressed.

To say the least, Jack found it difficult to get up in the morning. Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed did not happen for him until the sun went down. Nothing could get him out of bed in the morning. There was one exception. Jack gave me permission to wake him to watch the *Soupy Sales Show*. The comedy acts started at noon on Saturdays. Sometimes Jack got up, sometimes he mumbled. But when he did drag himself upstairs, it was fun to watch Jack laugh as Soupy carried on his antics with Pooky and Hippy. "Be true to your teeth and they won't be false to you," I remember Soupy intoning.

In 1962 athletics competed with time for Boy Scouts. I tried out for Junior High football. As I walked off to my first practice, dad gave me one piece of advice, "Tell them you want to play in the backfield, not the line." I didn't even know what those words meant, but I repeated them. Because I was taller and faster than most, the coaches put me at halfback.

I was a fast learner and football was fun. You got to wear a helmet and pads; run fast, bump, and tackle people. I played in several games and made a few touchdowns. I discovered I was a good punter. Dad was proud of me.

In mid-November, seventh-grade basketball started. My diary tells me I threw a football in the morning and shot baskets in the afternoon. Again, my size and speed helped me star in adolescent hoops. In two of the five games I scored one-half of the team points; winning 38 to 20 over Irving and losing 35 to 25 to Saint John.

Something tragic happened on November 30. Ron Francis—the seventeen-year-old brother of Jim Francis—died while lifting weights. They said later it was from a rheumatic heart. I knew Ron only casually. I did not know then, as I know now, how devastating a loss like that can be to a family. I didn't see Jimmy for a few weeks and we didn't talk about the death.

Eileen participated in something like Scouts. Her organization was called "Job's Daughters" and was the young ladies auxiliary of the Masonic Lodge. As one of the leaders, Eileen would have girls coming over the house, and would sponsor parties and luncheons. One of the Job's girls had a crush on me. Linda Beeson kept pestering me with notes with such statements as "I like you". The attention was flattering and I returned notes to her. But girls were just a curiosity. We held hands once after a Christmas party then drifted apart.

1963 to November

Now I was thirteen and in eighth grade. I continued with Miss Forsyth and Miss Day as my core instructors. I learned a lot from these teachers, even though I applied myself a little. Miss Kolasek was my music teacher and Miss Morrison taught Art. These two classes were not book-based and provided a change of pace—no homework. As I recall my Junior High years, my interests lay outside the school doors. Nearly all of my brief diary entries begin with the same line, "Today after school, I ...".

At thirteen, I began to attend a church youth group on Sunday evenings. We gathered in the social hall, played a few games, and George Davis led us in a Bible Study. The stuffy minister did not resonate with teens. I thought the whole affair was tedious and only attended to please my parents

If I were asked to describe my father in one word, that word would be "scoutmaster"—in an expanded sense of the term. He wanted to be involved in my life, as coach, as mentor, and as role model. I understood this and respected him for it.

Dad's approval was enough to keep me striving. His disapproval was sufficient to keep me walking the straight and narrow. Dad wanted my life to be more successful than his own. There was an unspoken understanding that I would certainly be going on to college and I would never spend my life as a laboring man.

Dad had troubles at work. I never figured how much was his performance; how much was the changing economy; and how much was his bad luck. Dad lost his job at Standard Oil, and floundered at a few other jobs. Finally, my mom helped him find employment. She knew somebody who worked at a new high school that was hiring janitors. Dad humbled himself and for a few years worked at Gavit High School. What can I make of this? Was John Foreman a

terrible father because he held such a lowly station in life? Or, was he an amazing dad because he accepted help from his wife and did his best to make ends meet?

My scoutmaster-dad pushed me hard to earn the Eagle badge. I was precocious, athletic, and motivated enough to accomplish it in record time— two years, one month, and three days. I passed the board of review on January 27 and received my badge at a court of honor on March 4. It was a whirlwind experience. In retrospect, it might have been better for me to delay the zenith award for a few more years, because after I earned the Eagle, I lost interest in scout events. But by that time, dad had a new project. Little brother Frank had been a Boy scout for six months and was zooming through the requirements just as I had.

I played basketball almost every day throughout January and February. My team won the Hammond Eight Grade Basketball Tourney with a thrilling 34-32 win over Harding. We celebrated as world-conquerors. Our reward was to see the Harlem Globetrotters play in Chicago on March 3.

In April, I began track practice. This would prove to be my premier sport. I excelled at high jump, broad jump, and the sprints. I was never a good team player and with track I could succeed in solitude. The overall team score didn't matter too much. If I won my individual event, I was a winner regardless. I required three stitches once when I jumped over five feet high and the metal bar smashed against my shin.

On April 11, Charlotte was involved in a serious car accident. She was driving Big Jim's Thunderbird when she crashed into the rear of another car. The sportscar was totaled and Frank, Charlotte, and Shelly went to the hospital. Dad, mom, and I rushed to see them. Shelly was in a restraining seat and was unhurt. Frank got a few stitches, and Charlotte suffered from whiplash. They all returned home that evening, but the experience resulted in a series of visits to the chiropractor. That's when we began our regular appointments with the Matthias brothers who practiced a bone-cracking technique called "Grostic".

Jack grew concerned about the military draft. One day after dinner he announced he had signed up for the Air Force. A few days later he went off to Lackland for basic training, then to Biloxi for his radio-intelligence specialty. We have a movie clip of Jack—his fiancé Sandy at his side— walking out our back door and heading to his first assignment in Trabzon, Turkey. Rather than dwelling in the basement, Jack would be keeping his eye on the Soviets.

Jack was into comedy albums and just before departing he bought the number one-selling album in the USA. *First Family* featured stand-up comedian and impersonator Vaughn Meader. Even my dad enjoyed the spoof. Was it because the album mocked the Kennedys or did dad develop a genuine affection for the first family?

During her senior year, Eileen became the “Honored Queen” of Job’s Daughters. That was a cause of celebration for the family. She graduated from Clark in June and had a steady boyfriend named Al Lewandowsky. I never saw what she liked about him. He was mean to me and disrespectful to Eileen. His nickname for her was “Stubby”, which was ironic because at five foot six inches, she was about as tall as he was. I considered Al a blowhard jock and I was happy when she dumped him before the end of the year.

Eileen would remain a part of the household for three more years. She worked at Saint Ann’s Home for a while, then settled in a steno-pool at Standard Oil. She bought a Chevy Corvair to zip around town. Eileen occupied the second bedroom, while Frank and I slept mostly in the attic.

I attended Camp Betz one more summer, working in the kitchen and earning some money. I had free time to canoe and swim. By this time, I wore the forest green uniform of an Explorer Scout. At a secret campfire ceremony, I was solemnly inducted into the Order of the Arrow.

Dad urged me to sign up for the camp’s rifle range. I plunked into the prone position, held the twenty-two rifle, and fired about twenty rounds. Only half hit the target. I did learn this fact about myself. Although I am righthanded, I am left-eyed. That circumstance went some way in explaining my lack of hand-eye coordination. My interest in Boy Scouts flagged and I was happy dad’s attention had shifted to Frank.

The summer of sixty-three was a time of bike exploring. Jimmy Francis and I would ride our bicycles to every odd place one could imagine. One of our favorite destinations was Eggers junkyard, the ugly twin of Egger’s Grove. Straddling the state line and unmonitored by law, these few acres were an illegal dumping ground for all kinds of treasures. Most of the items Jim and I found we destroyed. We would line up bottles and throw rocks at them; locate discarded TVs and pound them to pieces. Sometimes we pretended to be Godzilla on a rampage.

Why do adolescent boys crave destruction? It was always fun to create a sand castle or snowman, but even more fun to destroy our creation.

The oddest thing we found at the dump was an old tombstone. I forget the name but the death date was 1876. I was a student of history and declared this a genuine antique. Jim and I managed to drag this fifty-pound stone into his basement. It lodged in his coal room to make an occasional appearance on Halloween.

We also bicycled down to the railroad tracks by Whiting Park. We got into trouble there. During a previous train ride to Chicago we had paid ten cents to squash a penny in a machine. Someone told us that a rail car could do the same thing but for free. So, Jim and I grabbed a handful of pennies and discovered were we could see trains passing back and forth. We placed the copper on the iron rails and marked the position with a pile of gravel. It was so cool. We crushed about

a dozen pennies over the course of an hour. We talked about smashing a hundred to sell at school.

That's when a figure approached us. He shouted and gave chase. No chance. Thirteen-year-old boys can run like lightning when spooked. Finally, he shouted, "Please stop, boys, I just want to talk with you."

We obliged him. The man introduced himself as a railroad detective saying we had been reported by the train conductor. He asked if we were trying to derail the trains. "No", we gasped. He asked why we were piling stones and we said it was just to mark out where we placed the pennies. We showed him the squashed coins. He lectured us for several minutes, said we should tell our parents, and made us promise not to do such a thing again. Next time we might go to jail. At one point he said, "You boys should be doing something useful. Have you considered the boy scouts?"

Jim smiled. I winced. I didn't want to tell him I was an Eagle Scout.

Soon we were back in school and I developed a penchant for my science class. As a final project, I presented a lesson on laser beams. They were cutting edge science at the time. I brought in charts and my scout flashlight (the green one with the angled end). I looked for my childhood prism, but couldn't find it.

I explained laser was an acronym for "light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation". That impressed the class. Then I shined the flashlight against the wall and showed how the beam spread as it traveled. I explained white light was composed of the spectrum of colors while a laser beam consisted of a single color of light wave. That's what made it powerful. Mr. Peterson gave me an A. Too bad there did not exist a pocket laser back in 1963.

My voice was dropping and hair was growing in funny places. I grew to about five-foot ten. My football season was outstanding. I seemed bigger and stronger than most of the boys. I scored a touchdown every game and could kick the ball nearly fifty yards. Jacky Wetnight was our little quarterback and I remember in one game picking him up and carrying him five yards forward. The referee penalized me for "illegal assisting of the runner".

Hormones were also affecting my complexion. Pimples were popping out on my face. Eileen gave me some of her Noxzema, but it didn't help much. I became self-conscious of my looks and even more shy around girls.

I remember at the end of football season there was a special recognition dinner and I received an award. The setting was really fancy, unfamiliar to this working-class boy. We walked down a line of tables and a waiter offered various beverages. He suggested I try hot tea. That was something new to me. He filled my cup then asked, "lemon or cream?"

I didn't know anything about tea. I figured if either were good, both would be better. I said, "How about both lemon *and* cream?" His eyes widened; he smiled; then obliged. I took one sip of the curdled liquid and gagged. I made sure the smug waiter was out of sight before I dumped the contents into the waste bin. I did learn a lesson. Two good things in separation can become a nasty thing in combination.



Jimmy Francis was my singular friend. We would spend hours together in the attic laughing, drawing, and collaborating on homework. Frank would pop in and out. We were getting into popular music and listening to some of Eileen's forty-fives: *Blue Velvet*, *Deep Purple*, and *Sugar Shack*. Jim liked *Wipe Out* and would pound out the drum solo on boxes. I helped Eileen buy the album, *I Am the Greatest* by Cassius Clay.

One of the songs I played was by Bob Dylan: *The Times They are a Changin'*. That seemed to ring true in my life. Occasionally we would re-play *The First Family* album, but on November 22, 1963, the times did change. Cadence Records pulled that comedy album from record stores and destroyed all existing copies. It was a very sad day.