

# The Dash between the Dates: *A Chronicle of My First Seventy Years*

Chris Alan Foreman

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## Dedication

This book is dedicated to my quartet of grandchildren: Lorenzo Hugo, Gia Carmela, Genevieve Azalie-Marie, and Zofia Izabela Franciszka, all of whom may live into the twenty-second century and inhabit a world unimaginable to me. My blessing abides upon each of you.

After seven decades in the world, I have concluded that the secret ingredient of life is JOY. Without it, there is nothing. With it, there is everything.

Remember, joy is not a virtue you can strive to attain. It is not an emotion you can conjure through effort. Joy is a contented trust in the goodness of God. It is that fruit of the Spirit that springs forth when “what you want to do” corresponds with “what you ought to do”; that is, when the *delight* of your heart aligns with your *duty* to God. Joy will abound as you live out the prayer, “May Your kingdom come and Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

In childhood I sang, “Joy is the flag that is flown from the castle of my heart when the king is in residence there.” My dear grandchildren, raise aloft your flag of joy.

Your Gwampa Chris  
December 24, 2019

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## Preface

On the Wednesday following Mother's Day, 2019, I drove across the San Mateo Bridge into Hayward, California. As I passed through the gate of Holy Sepulture Cemetery, a sculpture of Archangel Michael greeted me. With sword in hand, his concrete foot was crushing the snakehead of Satan. I drove down narrow roadways, turned past acres of headstones, parked in a far-corner lot, then walked to gravesite SLR3-45.

I was on a mission for my two sons. For several years, Zachary and Simon had sent flowers to decorate their mother's gravestone. My part in this annual ritual was to stand in front of the stone, photograph the bouquets, and forward a picture to my offspring on the East coast.

With this task complete, I considered once again the two names chiseled into the marble slab. The name on the left belongs to my late wife: *Kim Hyun Deok Foreman, 1951–2010*. Her likeness, imbedded on a ceramic oval, smiled heavenward through fresh calia lilies. The name on the right side is mine, *Chris Alan Foreman, 1949–*, the dash reminding me that this double-decker plot awaits its second occupant. At some yet-to-be-determined date, when my mortal remains are laid to rest under this patch of turf, a second oval will be cemented into place, and a second death date will be duly etched.

Some may think me morose to contemplate my own demise. Not so. From antiquity, the church has instructed her children, "to keep death daily before your eyes." To the extent I practice this, I become free to live realistically and love authentically. I cultivate a beatitude attitude worthy of the one who saved me by His grace. Contemplation of death serves as a corrective to my vanity: "this body will become food for worms." It also provides a curative to my covetousness: "I can take nothing with me."

As a follower of Christ, I recognized death not as a terminus but a transitus—a portal between death and life-to-come, a journey from this world of shadows into the luminous presence of God. By fixing my gaze on death and looking beyond the grave, I anticipate the true goal of life—union with God.

By studying my gravestone, I also recognized life as a brief interlude between a birth date and a death date, with all of life's passion and sorrow, delight and drama, compacted into a single horizontal stroke—the dash between the dates.

As I pondered my own sixty-nine years of life, I thought of my parents who had passed on before me, who display a date at each end of their dash. My father, *John Francis Foreman, 1914–1977*, was laid to rest in Longview, Washington. I viewed his sixty-three years in four occupational/ geographical segments: as a vigorous youth in Ohio, 1914-1933; as a coal miner in Ohio, 1914–1950; as an oil and steel worker in Indiana, 1950–1968; and as an aluminum worker and evangelist in Washington State, 1968–1977.

I saw my mother differently. *Genevieve Marie Foreman, 1915–1999*, was laid to rest beside her beloved husband. I pictured her eighty-four years in three relationship segments: as a single woman, 1915–1933; as a married woman, 1933–1977; and as a widow, 1977–1999.

How do you view the story of *your* life?

# Introduction

*The Dash between the Dates* includes elements of chronicle, biography, apologia, and memoir. I write about my life month-by-month, year-after-year, as events transpired. I present hundreds of episodes, incidents, and snapshots over my span of seventy years.

This biography is written in my own voice as viewed through my own eyes. I accept the role as biographer of my life but reject being its author. God alone is the author and finisher of all things. As the pages of my life unfolded in real time, I had little control over what might be written in the next sentence, let alone in the next chapter. At one point, joy plummeted into grief at one mis-turn of a steering wheel. Certainly, I am not the author of my own biography. If so, I would have composed the story differently.

Likewise, I accept my role as the central protagonist of my story, but I reject being its hero. I see myself as the person in the poem, *Footprints in the Sand*. At times I complain that Christ has abandoned me along my arduous journey, later to discover that He had carried me in His arms when my own strength had failed. Only in retrospect, can I rightly interpret the single set of tracks. In that sense, this book serves as an apologia, justifying God's ways in my life.

Memoir is polished remembrance and truth re-imagined. As a memoirist, I recount objective events through the distorted lens of subjective memory. Some parts of my story are magnified, others minimized, and still others slanted or omitted. In one place, a single day fills one page, while in another, a few paragraphs sketch an entire year. Such is the nature of memoir.

My chronicle-biography-apologia-memoir of my first seventy years represents my best attempt to unpack and expand my dash between the dates.



Socrates enjoined, “The unexamined life is not worth living”. I wonder what the great sage would say of my “over-examined life”?

# Chapter 1

## Presaged

October 22, 4004 BC or 13.8 billion years ago

*“From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. (Acts 17:26)”*

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### Genealogy

Every human life enters a world in flux. Ancestors drift behind and descendants stream ahead. Based on information provided by the Population Reference Bureau, I have calculated my birth event to place about ninety-six billionth out of the one-hundred-eight billion souls who have ever inhabited planet earth. That places eighty-nine percent of humanity prior to me and eleven percent subsequent to me. With the number of newborns arriving at a rate of four per second, I may move down to the eighty-eighth percentile before I myself drift into history.

Can it be true that God has determined the times set for Chris Alan Foreman and the exact places where he should live? Did God Himself set 1949 for his birth year and place him in the state of Ohio as the fifth child of John and Jenny Foreman? I believe the answer is *yes*. Along with the psalmist, I affirm: “My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”

I believe an all-knowing and all-powerful God could certainly decree my placement in space-time. I further believe that an all-loving Father would situate my soul in a time and place where my free will would be most likely to seek Him and to find Him. The means by which our sovereign Lord might accomplish this mind-boggling task far exceed my ability to comprehend.

Just how much time has passed from the act of creation to the present moment is a matter of conjecture. Archbishop James Ussher served as the primate of Ireland between 1625 and 1656. He developed a chronology of world history formulated from a literal reading of Hebrew scripture. His calculation produced a creation date of October 22, 4004 B.C. Of course, this date has near-zero acceptance today, even among the religious community. However, some Christian creationists continue to propose Genesis dates of eight thousand to one hundred thousand years ago.

In contrast, most enlightenment scientists proposed a universe both infinite and eternal, reflecting the view of Greek philosophy. Only in the last century have cosmologists rejected this ancient steady-state model in favor of an expanding cosmos with an absolute start point. The current consensus among scientists is that the universe began 13.8 billion years ago with a big bang. Before that instant, there was nothing—no matter, no energy, no space, no time. In fact, there was no “before”.

As human being number ninety-six billion, I was presaged in multiple ways. The atomic particles that compose my body trace back to the moment of creation. Indeed, I am stardust. The origin of my biology may go back to

Adam if one is religiously minded or to primordial ooze if one is not. The Population Reference Bureau sets the arrival of modern Homo Sapiens at 50,000 B.C. or two thousand six hundred generations ago. All but the most recent of my ancestors are inscrutable to me; no faces, names, or stories.

I do have a narrow window into my distant past. Based on a sample of spittle, *Ancestry.com* assessed my genome to be 99.1% European and 71.3% eastern European. I should have saved my spit. I could have guessed that outcome. The same source tells me that my DNA displays 266 Neanderthal variants. I could have guessed the cave-man component as well.

I have observational knowledge of only four generations: five siblings, two parents, two grandfathers, and one great grandmother. Peering back into the mid-nineteenth century, my ancestors vanish into the chaotic mist of Eastern Europe. Shifting boundaries, mass displacements, two world wars, and an Atlantic crossing have conspired to obscure my DNA trail.

Once my four grandparents arrived in the New World, they shed the ways of the Old, embracing a new language and new way of life. Over the decades, their ethnic names and Slavic spellings Americanized in the crucible of a great melting pot.

As a second-generation patriotic American, I never held stock in my human pedigree. I assumed my dad's attitude of rugged individualism, "The president puts his pants on one leg at a time, just like everybody else." In my youth, I took little interest in my eastern-European roots. Being a "Polack" was a source of humor, not esteem. My sense of identity and value derived from my family and my faith.

## **Grandparents**

My father's parents were Joseph Formanski and Frances Novak. He was born in Zelen, Poland, in 1881 and she in Kosten, Poland, in 1887. They married in Recklinghausen, Germany, and emigrated to the USA in 1910. Four children were born to them: Steve and Victoria in Germany, Frank and my father John in America.

I have vivid memories of Grandpa Foreman who died in 1972, but none of Grandma Foreman who passed away in 1952. The story of their marriage has a tragic element and has passed down as follows: Frances had no intention to marry, wishing to become a nun. Her older sister was engaged to Joseph when the bride-to-be became ill. As her dying wish, she made Frances promise to wed Joseph. Frances kept her vow and the couple married. The union was fruitful but joyless.

Joseph served a few years in the German army. We have a portrait of him in cloak, plume, and spiked helmet. He became a coal miner in Silesia and took up that trade once he settled in Ohio. He once said that the big difference between European and American mines was that in Germany, a miner had to dig coal on his belly, but in America, a man could stand erect. Even as a child, I saw the metaphorical significance of that statement.

My mother's parentage is more complicated. Maryana Koba was born in Koba, Poland, in 1899 and emigrated to America in 1907 along with her parents, Vincent (born in 1862) and Rose (born in 1868). Mary spent a short time in an orphanage while her father spent jail time for bootlegging. At age sixteen, she married Frank Chinchek, and soon after bore my mother Genevieve. But even before my mother was born, her father died. In 1916 my grandmother re-married to Joseph Dydek who was born in Poland nineteen years earlier. Four more children were born to Mary, but the two girls died early. I have fond memories of my two uncles, Stutz and Joe. My mother says she never looked upon herself as a step daughter or step sister. She was just one of the Dydek family.

Memories of my Grandma Dydek are fleeting. She died of cancer in 1954, which devastated my mother since they were close friends and only seventeen years apart. My Grandpa Dydek lived into his eighties. I have a photo of this crusty old man holding my new-born son.

## **Father**

My father was born on September 19, 1914, in Bellaire, Ohio. He was the youngest of four children born to Joseph and Frances. The earliest documents show his surname to be "Formanski". The manner by which his name morphed into "Foreman" is uncertain. The best guess is as follows: The marriage between my grandparents was difficult. Frances sought to leave Joseph and return to Germany with her four children. We have a photograph of Steve, Victoria, Frank, and John posing in new clothes. We also have a passport photo of John. In 1921, Frances returned to Recklinghausen. Her home was not as she had left it ten years earlier. The Great War had devastated her city. Reluctantly, she returned to her husband in Ohio. We speculate the name "Formanski" was transformed into "Foreman" when Frances applied for American passports.

John was not raised in a religious home. His father was antagonistic toward the Catholic church and his mother remained bitter. Although not church going, John did acquire the rudiments of Christian faith in public school. He spoke of learning the twenty-third Psalm and whispered it to himself as he walked through the spooky Indian mounds.

We have an early newspaper clipping of "Johnny Formanski" sitting at the feet of "Jenny Dydek" while posing for a fourth-grade portrait. They attended school side by side and knew each other through most of their school years. John did not do well in academics, but excelled in sports. He played football and might have garnered a track scholarship to Ohio State, but by 1933 times were tough and money was tight.

This is a letter John wrote on July 4, 1933. In it my dad addresses his parents, his three siblings, and his girlfriend. The words paint a better picture of this eighteen-year-old man than I could compose.

Hello Everybody, how is everything out there? I hope you're feeling fine that is just how I feel. We left Chicago Saturday night because everything looks bad. Louis worked for the World's Fair and has \$160.00 worth of checks but can't cash any of them. Tony is working and she don't get paid regular either so we decided to keep on going. We stopped at Wilma's place but she wasn't home then we took a look through Lincoln Park and went down to the station. We caught a train there about 1a.m. and here we are in Cheyenne, Wyoming. How is that for time?

Well, we expect to stay here till tomorrow, then keep on going. We expect to be in Los Angeles in about three or four days, that is if we don't get a job on a ranch before we get there. We met a couple of fellows that said you get \$40.00 a month and board so if we can hit, we'll stay for a while.

Well, mother, here I am away in the West and eating regular, feeling good. Well, just now I am sitting with a couple, talking with dirty hands and face, but we'll soon find a place to clean up and rustle up some food. I don't think I'll be home as soon as I thought, but you don't have to worry about that. If you sent that letter to me in Chicago, Louis will send it to Los Angeles and it will be waiting there for me.

Well, Dad, here I am way out in the wooly west. Never had any trouble at all and when we hit Los Angeles we're going to stay for a while and try to find a job. They say it ain't so hard out there if you really want to work.

Well, Frank, are you still working in the glass house? I hope you found a better job so when I come back, I might get a lend of the car you're going to buy. How is Vic and Andy getting along? Still working every day? Well, tell them I said hello. Is Steve a Daddy yet? Tell him I'll try to bring home a nickel if I can. Tell Steve and Mary I said hello and hope them lots of luck. You better tell Jenny I said hello or she might get mad at me. Well, so long till I get a chance to write. Your loving son, John.

John never found his job in California. He told me he “peed in the Pacific” then slowly worked his way back to Ohio as a day laborer. He eventually found a position in the Ohio coal mines and married Jenny in 1935.

### **Mother**

My mother Genevieve Maria was born on December 30, 1915 in McMechen, West Virginia, and was baptized into the Roman Catholic Church on January 8, 1916. She was the daughter of Mary Koba and Jack Chincheck, a father who never saw her face. The story goes that Jack emerged from a hot coal mine, drank a few cold beers, passed out, and never woke up. This one-quarter of my grand-parentage is untraceable to me.

As a seventeen-year old widow with a newborn daughter, Mary wed Joseph Dydek on February 29, 1916. Although never formally adopted, Genevieve assumed her step father’s surname. Jenny—as she was known—grew up in an immigrant Polish family. She once recounted how she was squatting in an outhouse as a child while reading a Polish language newspaper. That was remarkable to her in retrospect, because in her adult years she could read no Polish at all.

By all accounts, this was a loving close-knit family. My mother’s Grandma Koby along with aunts and uncles were a big part of her early life. Jenny was a big sister to Stanley (Stutz) and Joseph (Joe). Sisters Helen and Josephine died young, surviving in a single photograph.

While John excelled in sports at Bellaire High School, Jenny succeeded in academics. She was proficient in secretarial shorthand. We have an exchange of personal letters between my mom and dad partially coded in shorthand. Fortunately, my sister Eileen was able to translate the mushy comments.

After graduating from high school in 1933, Jenny joined family members to work at the giant Imperial Glass Company along the banks of the Ohio River. She held that job while John was on the hobo out west. I think it was that separation that convinced the two lovers to marry.

### **Roots in Ohio**

Mom and dad were married on January 15, 1935. We have a portrait of the wedding party. Besides John and Jenny, we recognize my Uncle Stutz at sixteen years old and Uncle Frank at twenty-four years old. The rest are unknown.

My parents struggled during these years of the great depression. They lived in upstairs apartments and cracker-box homes. Jeanne Louise was born on June 27, 1935, and Charlotte Anne came along on November 16, 1937. Both girls were baptized into the Catholic Church and Aunt Anne became their godmother.

My father was finally able to establish his own home in 1940. The address was Box 87, Route 4, Bellaire, Ohio. Jeanne relates how this house came together. There was labor strife at the time and coal miners were striking for months at a stretch. About a dozen idle workers and friends pitched in to pour concrete, frame walls, and tack on roof. My dad became a lifelong handyman after picking up skills by erecting his own home. Both Jeanne and Charlotte have fond memories of this two-bedroom square home and delight in naming streets and neighbors.

In the early 1940s, Jeanne remembers waiting on the front step as dad walked home from work covered in coal dust. She would run across a baseball field to greet him dashing along a road paved with a coal waste called red dog. Dad would always kneel to her level, open his lunch pail, and present her with a “prize”—a wildflower or shiny stone that he would pick up along the way. These were her happiest days she says.

Charlotte recalls contracting a childhood illness then called “Saint Vitas Dance”. This condition caused her limbs to spasm. At times she could not walk and Jeanne had to pull her to school in a wagon. Dad took her to a chiropractor in Wheeling, West Virginia, and after a time all symptoms disappeared.

My father, two uncles, and two grandfathers labored in local coal mines. During the late 1930s and early 1940s they carpoled to various mines in eastern Ohio, the panhandle of West Virginia, and western Pennsylvania. Sometimes they would stay for weeks in tiny company towns. The subterranean jobs were dirty, dangerous, ill-paid, and subject to labor shutdowns. In 1944, my dad was hired at the Lorain Coal and Dock Company. He eventually led his own crew of ten. As “Foreman Foreman” he was authorized to hire his own sixty-four-year-old father for three months. That was just long enough to qualify the old man for social security. My father spoke of that deed with pride.

My dad was a hard-working man who enjoyed relaxing with his buddies. His carousing days came to an end one evening when my mother tagged along to one of his card-playing sessions. As a cohort of twenty-somethings, they were whooping it up. My Aunt Anne was the instigator having gained experience while a tavern waitress. She kept the liquor flowing, stuck cigarettes in the mouths of non-smoking women, and encouraged hapless men to make fools of themselves. At one point she maneuvered my dad to sit on the lap of an unmarried woman. The whole group burst out laughing

During the car ride home, my mother couldn't stop crying and my dad didn't stop shouting. Little Jeanne sat in the back seat terrified. After a few days of male contrition and female silence, my dad pledged never again to become a drunken fool. And to my knowledge, he never did. After that event, his priority shifted from party animal to family man.

Economic hard times came to an end when the United States declared war on Japan. My uncles Stanley and Joseph joined the army air corps and piloted aircraft over Germany. My Uncle Andy served on the home front as an army trainer. My dad was reticent to speak of his wartime experience. He explained that at twenty-eight years old and with two children in grade school, he was never conscripted. Plus, his job in the coal mine was considered strategic. When pressed why he never volunteered for military service, his response was, “My priorities were always at home.”

The home front was not without action for my parents. John Joseph (Jack) was born on March 15, 1943, and Eileen Marie followed on May 5, 1945. We have a demobilization photograph of my mother's extended family standing on a hillside in West Bellaire. My great grandparents, Vincent and Rose, sit as centerpiece. Charlotte and Jeanne stand beside their uniformed uncles. Dad is seated with Jack on his lap and mom sits next to him with baby Eileen tucked under one arm. After ten years of depression and five years of war, it was time to celebrate.

My parent's journey of faith is reconstructed through Jeanne and Charlotte. The Foreman family was Roman Catholic by heritage. Dad and mom were married in a Catholic church and the first four children were baptized into the Church. Their faith was nominal and they seldom attended mass.

One evening, my dad answered a knock at the door to greet a priest from the local parish. He informed my dad that the Foreman family was listed on the church roll and he dropped by to collect money for the local parish school. My dad informed the cleric that Jeanne and Charlotte attended a public school. The official nodded, but said as a registered Catholic he was still obliged to support the parish school. My dad muttered something and closed the door to the priest—and also to the Catholic Church.

It appears the two girls provided impetus toward a Protestant reformation. In 1944, Jeanne came home from school with a note. One of her teachers was offering a release-time Bible class. Attendance was voluntary and sessions were held during the lunch hour. My dad gave permission and for a year Jeanne and Charlotte learned stories from the Bible.

In 1945, the girls were taking piano lessons. During the summer, their instructor asked if they could accompany her to a Methodist vacation Bible school. Again, my dad agreed. However, after a week, their participation abruptly stopped. Jeanne had brought home a note, a pledge for each girl to sign stating that they "would not drink alcoholic beverages." It wasn't that my dad favored liquor consumption by his kids, but he bristled at the thought of some church asking little girls to sign a pledge.

After that event, my mom and dad began visiting churches. They stopped at several local churches before settling on the First Christian Church of Bellaire. My dad was welcomed by several of his high school buddies and felt at home. Mom was embraced by a friendly group of women. My older sisters joined the choir. A few weeks later, my father, mother, three sisters and brother, walked down the aisle to join. The church was small and Jeanne remarked with the addition of six members it was like a "mini-revival".

According to my sisters, the last few years of the 1940s were idyllic. The family was situated in a comfortable home, dad worked a stable job, mom nurtured four children, and the whole family worshipped together in a local church. But when I came onto the scene, at the tail-end of the decade, the situation began to change.

## Chapter 2

# Swaddled

beginning on December 24, 1949  
and continuing for 4 years, 2 months, and 7 days

*“And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes (Luke 2:12)”.*

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### Bellaire, Ohio

I entered the flux of humanity at 5:05 p.m. on December 24, 1949, the fifth child born to John and Jenny Foreman. My birth certificate notes my weight at nine pounds and one ounce. After spending one night at Bellaire Hospital, my mother was anxious to return home for the holidays. On Christmas morning, she wrapped me in swaddling clothes and placed me under the living room tree. Deceptive angels and stars danced above my head. Mom explained to four children that Chris was a special Christmas gift to the family. My sister Eileen is purported to have remarked, “What? Another brother? I already have one of those. I wanted a dog”.

My parents considered a few names for their second son, but my Christmas Eve advent cinched the deal in favor of “Chris”. My father deliberately chose not to name me “Christopher” after the tainted Catholic saint. One of his buddies joked, “since everyone else is calling the baby ‘Chris’, I’ll even things out and call him “Topher””. This moniker persisted for a while especially spoken by Jack and Eileen. Of course, any knowledge of my earliest days comes second hand to me.

I was alive for eight days during the decade of the forties. I have always looked upon myself as somewhat older and wiser than contemporaries who were born in the 1950s. That odd notion persists until this day. I tell youngsters I was born in the first half of the last century in the previous millennium.

In 1949, the conflagration of World War Two continued to spark global hot spots. A scan of contemporary events sets my historical context. During my birth year the Berlin blockade brought the USA and the USSR to the brink of war; Mao Tsi-tung proclaimed the People’s Republic of China; and India gained independence. Then, six months after my birth, an uneasy truce on the Korean peninsula exploded into war. The entire world was undergoing seismic change.

America had emerged from war as an economic powerhouse. Millions of men had returned home after demobilization and optimistic couples were migrating from city and farm into suburbia. It was a time to make babies. American children born in this era (1946 to 1964) were termed the “baby boom generation”.

I boomed in Bellaire for only thirteen months. During this time, my parents faithfully brought me to church. I have a certificate of nursery enrollment from the Christian Church in Bellaire, Ohio, dated January 6, 1950. My mother also cut and saved the accompanying notice from the church program announcing my arrival. Faith was a notable part of my life even at fifteen days old.

About that same time coal mines were shutting down across eastern Ohio. Employment prospects looked bleak

for my father. Word came that his company was about to shutter and dad began looking for a job outside the mining industry. This is his severance letter dated May 10, 1950.

To whom it may concern: John F. Foreman has been employed by the Lorain Coal and Dock Company for a period of six years. Six months as a laborer and timberman, two and a half years as a Unit Foreman, and three years as a Shift Foreman. All this work in a mechanical mine. He has proved himself to be dependable, ambitious, honest, and a good workman and supervisor. His job has been discontinued through no fault of his own. I do not hesitate to recommend him.

His situation wasn't as bleak as it might seem. In 1946 my mother's parents had moved to Whiting, Indiana, to work at the bustling Standard Oil refinery. Grandma Dydek encouraged my father to seek out a job in the oil industry.

My folks made a few long drives to investigate the job market and dad was promised a millwright position at Standard Oil. It still took six months to relocate.

The move away from Bellaire was difficult. Our roots were deep. Both parents had family in the Ohio hills and friends going back to childhood. Charlotte was ensconced in school and involved with classmates. Jeanne especially was upset about moving away from Bellaire. With tears she pleaded with dad to stay through her High School years. She explained she was trying out for the junior cheer team and it would just "kill her" if she made the team and then had to move away.

Jeanne tells me she was amazed at dad's response. He said, "Jeannie, if you do make the cheer squad, we won't move to Indiana. I can get a job anywhere". Jeanne didn't become a cheer leader at Bellaire High School which caused sadness, but she did learn how much her father valued her.

My mother held a different view about relocating. Yes, it would be difficult to leave the only town she ever knew, but she would be moving close to her mother. That would provide a fountain of joy. As for Jack and Eileen, they were young and were up for any adventure.

During the summer of 1950, Jeanne, Charlotte, and Eileen, spent a few months with grandma anticipating their migration. Then, after one more semester in Bellaire, all seven of us packed up a trailer and pointed the 1946 Hudson westward, driving four-hundred seventy miles to our new hometown in Indiana.

### **Whiting, Indiana**

My parents moved in with my mom's parents for a season. From February first until the end of June, seven people co-occupied space with Grandpa and Grandma Dydek. I am told it was crowded, joyful, and miserable all at the same time.

Four of the children enrolled at George Rogers Clark School at the midterm—Jeanne in tenth grade, Charlotte in eighth, Jack in second, and Eileen in kindergarten. Jeanne reports feeling out of place in her new school. Her classes were easier than in Bellaire but some of the kids made fun of her "hillbilly" accent. Eventually she made friends, and on October 9, 1951, she made a lifelong special friend by the name of Donald John Zeleznik.

Within the broadcast beam of Chicago-land, television became our great distractor. Bellaire had been too remote for decent reception, but with four channels of daylong broadcasting, my cramped family became mesmerized by the flickering tube. The 1950s would become the golden age of TV. With such tremendous

cultural and informational influence emanating from Chicago, we felt more like citizens of Illinois than of Indiana. Mayor Daley became my personal mayor.

My folks began looking for real estate the moment we arrived in Whiting. The tight quarters made this an imperative for dad. He ran into problems getting a bank loan and had to borrow outside money to close the deal. Jeanne wrote a diary for the year and located the day we entered our new premises. It was June 30, 1951. On that same day, she records, mom announced to the family she was expecting a baby. Jeanne's response was, "What? I'm sixteen years old! How can mom be having a baby?"

My parents were thrilled with their new property. 1750 Lake Avenue included a two-bedroom brick home with a basement, attic, front and back porch. The corner lot encompassed a detached rental unit and sat at an intersection of maple-lined streets. Clark School was just one block away. I think the sale price was about \$9,000 with the rental unit covering most of the monthly mortgage. My dad was earning about thirteen dollars a day at the time.

Our mailing address was Whiting, Indiana, but our actual location was the Robertsdale neighborhood of Hammond. As a cultural extension of Whiting, we resided in the extreme northwest corner of the state, about one mile east of the Illinois border and one mile south of the Lake Michigan shore. Our cross-road to Lake Avenue was 118<sup>th</sup> Street, meaning we lived one-hundred eighteen blocks south of downtown Chicago.

Hoosiers in other parts of Indiana referred to this northwest corner of the state as "da region" because of its proximity to mobster-famed Chicago. In fact, our clocks were set to the central time zone of Illinois and not the eastern time zone of remnant Indiana.

Whiting was hemmed in by heavy industry—oil refineries, steel mills, and processing plants. Not without reason was it referred to as the "armpit of the state". The saying went that a north wind brought a stench of alewife from Lake Michigan, a west wind the musky odor of corn product, and a southeast wind stinky sulfur from Standard Oil. My dad would sniff the air, "So what? That's the smell of money." Distant flares of escaping gas shone through the night and shrill whistles marked factory change in shift. Once a visitor arrived at our house in late winter. She asked my mom why piles of coal were lining the streets. Mom sheepishly responded that sometimes the snow turns black.

Most of Robertsdale consisted of reclaimed marshland, surrounded by shallow lakes. One section of housing, near Wolf Lake, was called the *Water Gardens*. Every few years, the area would flood and our family would drive down to see residents paddle to their front doors in canoes. In the fields surrounding our house, children would dig holes in the sandy soil. Inevitably they would strike water at three feet and the hole would collapse. Until my adult years, I figured that if a person really wanted water, all he would have to do is dig a few feet into the ground.

Our region was also noted for train traffic. All the rail lines from the east coast to Chicago—going and coming—passed by our southern tip of Lake Michigan. Mill trains pulled coal and iron while the refineries shipped petroleum product. The rails rumbled day and night without pause. It was not uncommon for an automobile to wait thirty minutes while an engine towing a hundred boxcars pulled forward and then backed up. Sometimes we counted each car to counter frustration.

In the fifties, Whiting was a white ethnic enclave. Some people were long standing residents, but most industrial workers were of first- or second-generation Slavic ancestry—mostly Poles and Slovaks. Six Catholic churches flourished in this compact area of fifteen-thousand souls. Growing up, I never met a person with

black or brown skin. Whiting was a sundown town, meaning no negroes were permitted within city limits after dark. I remember the remark “the first word in Whiting is white.”

## **Frank**

The first piece of new furniture for the new house was a Philco 16-inch round television. During the long summer of her pregnancy, mom relieved stress by watching Jack Brickhouse announce Cubs baseball on WGN-TV. The season ended about the same time as mom’s pregnancy. The Cubs fell to last place, while the Yankees once again won the World Series.

Frank James Foreman was born on September 13, 1951, at Saint Margaret’s Hospital in Hammond, Indiana. He was named after my dad’s older brother who lived in Chicago and was childless. We spoke of Frank as being the one Hoosier in the midst of five Buckeyes. At twenty-one months my junior, he became my playmate and best friend. We employed the buddy system throughout life, looking after each other. Frank and I always got along, playing together quietly.

Frank rounded out this family of six children. I wrote about us in a poem called *I Wonder*:

I wonder at the wonder of two parents with six kids all jammed into one 1946 Hudson. How did we all fit?

I wonder at the wonder of two parents with six kids managing one meager bathroom. How did we all keep clean?

I wonder at the wonder of six kids all going to school, from first grade to twelfth. How were we all clothed?

I wonder at the wonder of two parents with six kids eating together every dinner meal. How was everyone fed?

I wonder at the wonder of two parents with six kids filling one full row at Sunday church. How did we all arrive on time?

I wonder at the wonder of two parents ...

## **First Impressions**

Memories of my first four years are imprecise and uncertain. Do I remember the true event, a re-telling of the event, or just an antique photo? It’s challenging to distinguish substance from shadow.

I remember sleeping in a large bed with mom, dad, and baby Frank. My little brother would sometimes sleep in the bottom, floor-level dresser drawer. With sleeping space at a premium, I think I shared a room with my parents until my fourth birthday.

I remember sitting in a booster chair around our dinner table when plaster and dusty cotton began falling from above. Jeanne yelped as her leg poked through a gash in the ceiling. I was transfixed. My dad rushed upstairs to

pull my sister from her predicament. Our unfinished attic would undergo periodic upgrades over the next ten years, until it finally became a semi-habitable living space.

In the summer of 1953, The Dydeks were expanding their across-town home. I remember piles of sand and waving to Don Zelen working on the roof. Jeanne expounded on my snippet of memory. She tells me that Grampa Dydek refused to pay Don for the work he did. He claimed that back in 1940, when dad's Bellaire house was under construction, he had worked for free. Don needed the cash, because he was enrolling at Western Michigan University for the Fall semester. Grandma Dydek got so angry at grandpa that she moved out of the house and worked for a time as a hotel maid. She cleaned rooms until she could pay back the full amount of her stingy husband's debt.

I remember a few moments of Halloween, 1953. Mom took Frank and me to knock on grandma's door. We were both dressed as cowboys. Grandma gushed over Frankie's cuteness, but ignored me. When she noticed my rejection, she walked out the door and bent over to give me a hug. I can't remember much about my grandmother, her face, her voice, or her home. I could never forget her love.

I see photos of Christmas, 1953, and remember playing with those exact toys. I pedaled that army jeep and I cranked that string to lift the elevator shaft. I retain the muscle memory. Holidays were always special in our house. New Year's Day was banging pots; Easter was dress up for church; July fourth was parades and fireworks, Halloween was costumes, Thanksgiving was food, and Christmas was gift-giving.

I can remember popular songs of the era. *St. George and the Dragonet* by Stan Freberg was unleashed on the public in September of 1953. We must have played that disk dozens of times because sixty years later, upon first re-hearing, I was able to recite every punch line. My family loved parody. The low-brow humor of Homer and Jethro reverberated through my life: "It bruised her somewhat and hurt her otherwise, but I'm glad it did not bruise her elsewhere."

I remember bouncing off walls and hopping on beds to 78-rpm records like *Der Fuehrer's Face* by Spike Jones and *Too Fat Polka* by Arthur Godfrey. This endless treasure of wacky recordings was a legacy of my brother Jack. Communal laughter filled our lives.

I remember the night-time sounds of my neighborhood as I drifted into sleep. Years later I wrote about these "Distant trains whistling through the dark".

Lonely sounds, dimly piercing the night's summer air  
—only through stillness at all are they there.  
Before childhood dreams, the distant trains sang far away songs.

Far away songs through the quiet of night  
Comfort the darkness of childhood's fright,  
Lullabied to sleep by distant songs of far-away trains  
whistling through the dark.

## Chapter 3

# Nurtured

beginning on March 6, 1954  
and continuing for 6 years, 3 months and 3 days

*“Train up a child in the way he should go:  
and when he is old, he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)”*

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1954

Childhood served as an apprenticeship to life. I experienced unconditional love, felt genuine security, and learned to trust those adults God placed in my path. I received the Christian faith of my parents both naturally and supernaturally.

My first substantial memory occurred when I was four years and two months old. My sister Jeanne was going to marry Don! It was a very big deal. I remember the excitement and preparation, the out-of-town guests and fancy clothes, the dancing and celebration. My father purchased a thirty-five-millimeter movie camera just for the occasion.

At a rehearsal a few days prior to the wedding, Jeanne told me I was going to be the ring bearer. That was so cool. There would be a circus ring and I could be the “bear”. I mentally practiced my bear growl. I also learned the word “cummerbund”. That was the silly black cloth they wrapped around my tummy and fastened behind my back. The grown-ups gushed at me decked in my mini-tux.

The church ceremony was an adult affair that I didn’t understand. I obeyed my elders as they directed me to walk, stand, and hold out a cushion. Afterward, dad said I didn’t “fidget too much”, which I took to be a complement. Then it was time to dash downstairs for refreshments. There is a picture of me, face smeared with wedding cake, the beautiful bride looking on.

As the celebrating continued, I did begin to fidget. I was a big boy and knew how to use the toilet. However, I couldn’t figure how to unfasten the obstinate cummerbund. I was too embarrassed to ask an adult. They were all too busy anyway. And so, for the last time in my life, I wet my pants. With streaming tears, I ran to mom, who took me by the arm and made things right again—just as she always did.

The evening reception was strange, even to the eyes of a four-year old. The celebration was held in the dingy basement of our home where the giant furnace, clothes washer, and bogeyman resided. Clutter packed the coal room while thirty people jammed into the subterranean space. Couples danced to polka tunes while at the same time ducking furnace pipes. A foot-pumped player piano provided some of the dance music. It was a day to remember. And I did.

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The remainder of 1954 remains shrouded. My first niece, Debra Jean Zelen, arrived in September. Jeanne relates the sweet sorrow. On the day after Debbie’s birth, she carried the newborn to a different ward in the same hospital. My Grandma Dydek was bedbound dying of cancer. She held her great granddaughter only on this single instance. I can’t recall my niece’s birth or my grandmother’s death.

I vaguely remember Jeanne, Don, and little Debbie moving into our house. They occupied mom and dad's room for a year, while my parents relocated to the second bedroom. In later years it became a sport to figure out where Charlotte, Jack, Eileen, Chris, and Frank slept in 1954.

I do remember children's TV shows that were popular in my fourth year of life, but it's impossible to tell if the memory is from that year or later. There was Howdy Doody; Kukla, Fran, and Olli; and Romper Room. In truth, there were so many shows broadcast and I watched so many hours, that recounting every local show, cartoon favorite, and movie short would be daunting.

### 1955

My unbroken memory begins in 1955 when mom walked me to Clark School to register for kindergarten. Because I was December born, I began school in January not September like most other kids. My mid-term status aligned my school year with the calendar year.

Miss Bond was my first teacher. As I look back at the twenty-one faces in my class photo, I can name one-third, guess one-third, while one-third remains unrecognized. Eric, Laurie, Karen, and Don would be my class-mates for the next thirteen and a half years. I remember playing with blocks, napping on blankets, counting to one hundred, and reciting the alphabet. I got in trouble once for pushing Eric off the sliding board. Miss Bond commented on my pink report card: "Chris shows dramatic ability and does well in expressing ideas in drawing, but he fails to listen and continues to dramatize when the play is over."

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Dad was continually involved in building projects. In 1955 he bricked in the wooden back porch and converted a kitchen pantry into bunk-beds for Jack and Eileen. I was scolded for playing in the construction zone. In August of that year, the Standard Oil refinery caught fire. The blaze raged for days. I remember my family sitting as spectators at the Clark School bleachers gazing at the distant inferno.

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Charlotte went to Alaska after high school. She visited our uncles Joe and Stutz who were in the Air Force. I remember the celebration when she returned. She brought back all kinds of exotic treasures. I remember the plastic key chains with "real Alaskan gold dust" embedded inside. The Eskimo yo-yos were fun. They consisted of two fur-covered balls at opposite ends of a rope. We held the rope in the middle and tried to make the balls circle in opposite directions. She also brought back a polar bear skin. What ever happened to that rug? But the best thing Charlotte brought back was herself. I missed my sister.

---

Cookie was the little black dog that moved with us from Ohio. As I remember, the rotund canine seemed eternally old and dyspeptic. I think my parents bought the pet for Jack, but dad ended up the reluctant care giver. I don't remember ever playing with Cookie or walking her. I'm sad to say she was more of a nuisance than companion. As a result, I never acquired an affection for dogs—that is, until much later in life.

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Frank and I were raised on television. That flickering screen was our world and we indulged unsupervised. All the way through grade school we sat more hours in front of the tube than on reading or doing school work. On October 3, 1955, the Micky Mouse Club debuted. I was hooked. I wore the mouse ears to bed and played the

vinyl recordings continually: “Who’s the leader of the club that’s made for you and me? M-I-C-K-E-Y M-O-U-S-E.”

Our toy of choice became two-inch Disney figurines we dubbed “Little Friends”. Frank and I loved these globs of colored plastic and would play make-believe for hours imagining Donald Duck, Goofy, and the seven dwarfs, in endless adventures. We used blocks and tinker toys to build our play-scape. Frank’s favorite dwarf was Sleepy and mine was Bashful. Perhaps our preferences provide insight into our dispositions.

A big event was the “twenty dollars-worth of toys” day. Some of mom’s Ohio friends worked at the Marx Toy Factory. When they visited, they brought boxes and boxes of plastic toys. I remember mom saying with little friends we could baby-sit ourselves for hours. Frank and I were content as long as we held a toy between our fingers and a bite of salami between our teeth. We didn’t box up our toys until Boy Scout days. Make-believe lasted a long time.

### 1956

My first-grade teacher was Miss Zeller. I learned how to read using *Fun with Dick and Jane*. The covers of these readers still provoke my soul to nostalgia: “Oh, look! See Sally. See Sally jump up and down.” The storyline of Dick, Jane, Sally, Spot, Puff, and Tim filled my literary world. I also remember addition, subtraction, singing, crafts and story time. I was a bit dyslexic but I was able to keep up with school work. Dad and mom seemed content that I was average in scholarship, effort and conduct. Average equaled good enough. I was always perfect in attendance.

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My family took bi-yearly trips to Bellaire to visit relatives. Mom would prepare salami sandwiches and dad would pack the pee bottle for me and Frank. There would be few stops along this eight-hour trek. Dad always drove the Hudson and mom would sit next to him. Jack, Eileen, and I sat in the backseat. Frank made a nest of blankets under the back window. Dad would point out sites along the route. I remember McCullough’s Leap and the “House we pass three times” as ritual landmarks. Dad would simmer when our speed slowed behind a line of trucks. He loved to return to Ohio and boasted about the wonderful Ohio rest stops.

Once we arrived in Bellaire, adults talked, laughed, and played cards. Frank and I existed in our own bubble. We would greet our elders appropriately then retreat to our play things. Grandpa Foreman was seventy-five in 1956, and my aunts, uncles, and cousins were too grown up to connect with kids. But Frank and I were satisfied to be in our own world and participate in adult activities only when required. I do remember my Aunt Mary once asking about my coonskin cap and me explaining about Davy Crockett, who I knew to be the “king of the wild frontier.”

On one trip to Bellaire, dad extended the drive eastward. We stopped off at Niagara Falls, Gettysburg, and Washington, D.C. before making our way back home. An old photo shows mom and dad in front of the Capitol Building with Jack, Eileen, Chris, and Frank in the foreground. Four of us have a melting ice cream cone in hand.

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Flowers and Charlotte will always go together. In first grade I learned the song “I know a pussy willow”. Charlotte helped me pick these tokens of Spring, carry them home, and put them in vases. She pointed out the lilies of the valley that grew up and down the alley during the month of May. Our favorite tradition was the

annual trip to Eggers Grove to seek out the first violets of Spring. Charlotte would load us in the car and drive us across the state line. She would shout with joy whenever she spotted a clump of violets.

In the springtime, front lawns became super-saturated with rainwater. Hundreds of earthworms would squirm above the soil and wiggle onto the sidewalks. On the walk to Clark school, most little girls would step around the worms and many little boys would stomp on them. I chose to scoot them back to the grass with the toe of my little shoe.

Our church sponsored a summer picnic at Forsyth Park. I remember being overheated and overstuffed. Dads played softball while moms talked and looked after children. I remember vividly a foot race for six-year-olds. My dad shouted, "Ready, set, go!". He then side-galoped down third base to call the winner. He was so disappointed I had tied for first place. He asked why I was deliberately lagging.

I introduced him to my new best buddy and explained that I wanted the two of us to cross the finish line together. Dad was at a loss for words.

---

I was beginning to know some of our neighbors on Lake Avenue. Mary Ann Kokot was Eileen's peer and lived to our right. Her two older brothers kept a hunting dog named Duke that would scare me sometimes. Joey Piscure, a hyperactive kid, lived on the far side of them. Across 118<sup>th</sup> Street lived old lady Smeric. She spoke Slovak and would yell at us in unknown tongues when we retrieved a ball from her back yard. Across the back alley stood First Baptist Church. The artificial hill that rose to its foundation was our only rise in elevation. We would sled down the hillside in snowy weather. Finally, mean Mr. Cruell lived kitty-corner from us. He would send a policeman to our door whenever he caught Cookie leaving a mess on his front lawn. The cast of characters and encounters could fill pages.

---

I remember mom and dad ushering the family off to the First Church of Christ every Sunday of the year. Dad would put on his suit and tie; mom would underlie her fancy dress with a girdle; and each of us kids would put on our Sunday best. Jack was always the problem. Dad would shout to motivate him into the car. I would go to a children's service and sit with my buddies. My longtime friend, Jacky Wetnight, was my favorite.

I cannot remember a time when I was not a Christian. As the twig was bent, so grew the tree. I acquired the gift of faith by singing and gesturing to Sunday school songs. The nursery was my theological seedbed. First, I learned about the love of Jesus.

"Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so,  
Little ones to him belong. They are weak, but He is strong.  
Yes, Jesus loves me. The Bible tells me so."

"Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world,  
Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight.  
Jesus loves the little children of the world."

I learned the primacy of scripture, Sola Scriptura.

"The B-I-B-L-E, yes that's the book for me.  
I stand alone on the Word of God, the B-I-B-L-E."

I learned the need for salvation.

“Behold, behold, I stand at the door and knock, knock, knock.  
If anyone hears my voice, I will open-open-open the door. I will come in.”

I learned about Christian joy through standing, sitting, pointing, and clapping.

“I’m in right, outright, upright, downright happy all the time!  
Since Jesus Christ came in and cleansed my heart from sin,  
I’m in right, outright, upright, downright happy all the time!”

I also learned about eternal security.

“Safe am I, safe am I, in the hollow of his hand.  
Sheltered o’er, sheltered o’er, with His love forevermore.  
No ill can harm me, no foe alarm me, for He lives both day and night.  
Safe am I, safe am I, in the hollow of his hand.”

Finally, I learned the wisdom of self-control by pointing to body parts.

“Be careful little feet where you go.  
For the Father up above is looking down in love,  
So be careful little feet where you go.”

I continue to be careful about where my little feet go, what my eyes see, what my tongue says, and what my hands do

## 1957

In the first half of second grade, Miss Fisher was my teacher. Like many primary school teachers of her era, she was born around 1900 and educated around 1920. She was an old-fashioned spinster, dedicated to her calling, but perhaps burned out. I remember continuing with *Dick and Jane*, but expanding to other children’s books. She read to us every day. I could identify with the adventuresome *Boxcar Children*. We began to learn other subjects. Geography and history were my favorites.

Miss Parker was a first-year teacher for the second half of second grade. Her big thing was American Indians. We put on war paint (finger paint), made necklaces (dyed macaroni), donned a native vest (fringed paper bag) and sang pow-wow songs. I can still do the gestures. She introduced us to a publication called *My Weekly Reader*.

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Frank and I had some vague rules about how far we could stray from home. One day Frank, Jacky, and I stretched those rules by wandering three far blocks away, next to the busy Indianapolis Boulevard. While playing in a vacant lot, Frank tumbled and got a nasty gash on his knee. He howled at the sight of so much blood. Jacky and I got him home as best we could. Mom had to break herself away from a cluster of ladies to deal with her wounded and wailing boy.

---

My best friends were Jacky Wetnight and Jimmy Francis. Both boys lived on my block. The Wetnights were part of my church life and Jacky was the fifth of six kids like me. From my earliest days to eighth grade we were best buddies. Then he moved away to Munster. Jimmy Francis enrolled at Clark school in second grade and our friendship continues to this day.

Jim and his family were Baptists and for a few summers I attended Vacation Bible School with my classmate. I don't remember much about what the old guy taught. What sticks with me is his genuine affection toward his charges and how he embodied God's love.

---

God's love was also at work in our house. I did not recognize it at the time and it often embarrassed me. My mother would welcome all kinds of strange people into our living room. First came visitors from Ohio, mostly young people who needed temporary housing and counsel. Then came a stream of troubled women often in tears and in need of comfort. My mom would pat their hands and listen to their woes. Sometimes I overheard rude remarks aimed at these poor souls by visiting friends of Jack or Eileen.

---

Our dog, Cookie, began to have seizures and one day dad took her on a one-way ride to the vet. Still my parents thought pets would be good for Frank and me. We had two hamsters for a while. I was amazed to see them devour dandelion stems then appalled to see them do the same with their offspring. Dad constructed a really neat wooden cage, but the rodents gnawed through the bottom and escaped into the wild.

We kept dime-store turtles for a year or so. Mine was called *Hotrod* and Frank's *Pokey*. We would race them down a three-foot wooden track. We were inattentive in our play and often the little turtles escaped in the house. I remember one day looking around for Hotrod. Eileen joined in. As she searched, one of the bedroom doors wouldn't open wide. She gave the door a shove—*crunch*. She discovered the reason for the door jam and graciously provided a jewel case in which we buried my crushed turtle.

Eileen also kept a pet. Tweetie Pie was her yellow and green parakeet. She would feed the bird by putting a treat between her lips and then kissing the colorful face. I remember Eileen playing her accordion and Tweetie flitting about shoulder to shoulder

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The seventh year of life is an enchanted age. Alice of Wonderland was seven when she walked through the Looking Glass. Childlike imagination and an emerging practical sense merge into a magical world. I wrote a story about my wonderland of 1957.

As I walked down the alley behind my house, something caught my eye. It was an umbrella poking up from a garbage can. I plucked it from the trash and studied it. I saw the broken spokes and torn fabric and knew it wouldn't be a prize I could show to mom.

But I thought, "this could be a cool sword." So, I waved it over my head and smacked the metal can. I succeeded in making clangs, but the umbrella was too unwieldy for a sword.

"Maybe it's a walking stick." I put the point into the gravel and strutted past a few backyards, but that didn't work either. The umbrella fell open. I stepped on the black nylon and nearly tripped.

I was about to stuff my prize into another trashcan when I noticed the umbrella knob in my hand. Wow! It sparkled like a diamond—and a big diamond too, about the size of my seven-year-old fist. I was too grownup to believe it was really a diamond. My big sister Charlotte had just got a diamond ring from her boyfriend. He said it cost hundreds and it was only the size of a BB pellet.

I twisted the diamond top, but couldn't separate it from the umbrella stalk. I walked into the basement and found Jack reading a Mad Magazine. My big brother looked up. "What you got there?"

"I found this in a garbage can."

"Hey, can't you see it's broken," he laughed.

"I know, but look at the diamond on the end."

Jack snatched the umbrella from my hand. "That's not a diamond, just cut glass."

"I know, but it's still pretty neat. I want to keep it but I can't pull it off."

These words were taken as a challenge by Jack, a freshman in high school. He strained and twisted, but the knob wouldn't budge. Then he went to dad's work bench, grabbed a pair of vise grips and unscrewed the top diamond. "Right tool for the right job," he said. I recognized my father's voice. "This looks nice. I think I'll keep it". Jack stuffed the diamond in his pocket and raised the booklet hiding his eyes.

With one burst of lung power, I screamed, whined, and snorted.

Jack lowered the Mad Magazine revealing a grin. "Just teasing," and he tossed the treasure to me.

I carried my prize upstairs, washed it in the bathroom basin, shined it with toilet paper, and walked out the front door. I waved the diamond over my head as I strutted around the block. That's when I discovered its magical powers. Whenever I held it in the sun, the diamond made rainbows! I couldn't believe how it worked. I covered it with my hands and the rainbows went away. Then I held it in the sunshine and the rainbows reappeared.

I showed the diamond to Jacky who was sitting on his front stairs. He tried it a few times and was amazed. I showed it to snooty Linda who was walking back from the corner store.

"I know," she said with a sneer. "My mom's got one of those hanging in front of her kitchen window."

Once I took the top diamond to school for show and tell, but since there was no sunshine in the classroom there was no rainbow. Miss Fisher called my prize a "prism". I sometimes wrapped it in paper to hide around the house as pirate treasure. I remember when mom helped to attach a string to it so it would dangle in my bedroom window.

As a teenager, I had a science project on prisms. I looked for my glass ball in all my closets and around the basement, but couldn't find it. Did I hide my treasure too well to never find it again? I couldn't remember. I sighed as I recalled the enchantment of childhood, a time when common objects could reveal hidden magic. It proved impossible to reclaim that kind of wonder again.

1958

My third-grade teacher was the fabulous Mrs. Chambers. How much did I like her? Well, from that point forward, my ambition was to become a school teacher. She knew how to speak to us kids as adults, yet relate to us as children, never condescending always kind. She was my Disney's Snow White and I was one of her seven dwarfs—*Bashful* by name. She would read to us, encourage us, and send notes home to mom about my accomplishments. More than anyone, she saw potential in me that no one else saw.

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About that same time, my mother began to work at Clark school. She was a *janitress*, and worked a split shift—two hours before school and two hours after school. She said she needed to do this because my dad's salary was not enough to keep the family fed and clothed. I remember the times I stayed after school to help her bang chalk erasers and empty waste paper baskets. I believe she worked at the school for about five years.

One of the perks of mom's job was her claim to discarded school items. At the end of every school year she would bring home a huge bag of unclaimed pencils, notebooks and small toys. This booty recovered from lost and found provided a June Christmas.

The oddest thing mom ever brought home was a human skull. She recovered it from a waste basket in the biology lab. She presented it to me and Frank as an educational item. However, we used the head bone as a prop and made "skull island" for our little friends. Someone must have told mom the skull was an inappropriate plaything and soon it vanished from our sandbox.

Several years later, I thumbed through the Clark School year book. The caption under one photo read, "Here is the biology teacher posing next to 'Mr. Bones'". I was not surprised to see the skeletal display headless.

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In 1958 a new family moved into our back apartment. They were the Buchmans from Orange, Texas. The father, Chester, migrated north to construct the Interstate highways. Jessica looked after three daughters—Linda, Lorene, and Janette. The family constituted a longtime project for mom and dad. Some neighbors referred to the Buchmans as *white trash*. The three girls seemed to be in constant trouble with the law or with boys. Jessica became one of the troubled women who consumed my mother's time.

In the summer of 1958, my parents invited the Buchman family on a car expedition around the perimeter of Lake Michigan. Dad had read about the grand opening of the longest bridge in the world and figured driving across the Straits of Mackinaw would make for a fine vacation. I do remember the three Great Lakes we visited, but more I remember my parent's effort to patiently work with the Buchman family. It never succeeded. Chester and Jessica got divorced, the girls got pregnant, and in 1963 they all returned south.

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At twenty-one years old, my sister Charlotte appeared as a movie star to me, always flitting, wearing a fancy dress and red lipstick. In my early years, Char would bend me backward in her arms and plant a giant red kiss mark on my cheek. A parade of male suiters walked through our front door to escort Charlotte on dates. I was surprised when she chose to marry Jim Walker late in 1958. He was not my favorite of the bunch. I don't remember much about the wedding, except after Charlotte left our home, some of the joy departed with her.

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Newton Minnow famously described American television as a “vast waste land” and for most kids growing up in the 1950s his description is apt. I calculate my TV habit to be three hours per day with a steady diet of Bugs Bunny, Superman, and Garfield Goose. I knew all the shows in TV Guide and could lip-sync every commercial. My TV-scape is too vast to enumerate every show. If you were to ask a typical baby boomer to narrate their childhood, most would include a recitation of favorite TV shows.

It’s hard to explain, but 1950s television was like video gaming and social media rolled into one package. All the kids watched the same set of programs. Often, I would discuss favorite shows, like Zorro, with my school mates. We guys would act out the slapstick of Moe, Larry, and Curley. Adults were clueless, while we giggled and horse-played. There were a few oases in the wasteland. Once, I amazed Mrs. Chambers by spelling E-N-C-Y-C-L-O-P-E-D-I-A. I didn’t tell her it was Jiminy Cricket who taught me the word.

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My family was faithful in church attendance and in 1958 the First Church of Christ voted on its “mother of the year”. During an evening celebration the aluminum-foil crown was placed on the head of my mother. Church ladies cheered and handed her a bouquet. It came as no surprise when a month later my dad was voted “father of the year”. The newspaper clipping shows the two of them, arm in arm, surrounded by church members, and grinning at the camera.

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My second niece, Susan Jane, was born in August 1958. I remember visiting the hospital to see Jeanne and her new baby. However, it was after hours. So, when we returned to the parking lot, Jeanne flung open her third-floor window, shouted to us, and held up Susie so we could all take our first look.

I associate Susie’s birth with hula hoops. It was about that time we were singing, “Hula hoop, hula hoop, everyone’s playing with the hula hoop”. Eileen and Mary Ann were good. I could do only three spins before the hoop fell to my ankles.

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Frank and I were not only into Disney toys, but also plastic dinosaurs. Dad knew what was at the top of my wish list for Christmas 1958. He had to know. I had scissored out the picture of a dinosaur set from the Sears catalogue and taped it strategically to the refrigerator.

A week before Christmas, I began snooping around the house. I looked in closets and under beds. Finally, I found the Sears box of dinosaurs in the basement under some blankets. At first, I was overjoyed. But what could I do? If I told Frank, he’d squeal to mom and I’d get scolded. But it was so hard to keep such a big secret without exploding. On Christmas morning I pretended to be excited. After this experience, I concluded it was better not to know about surprises in advance.

## 1959

If Mrs. Chambers was Snow White to me, my fourth-grade teacher, Miss Benny, was the Wicked Witch—the teacher with a poison apple. I nearly failed fourth grade, and my accomplice in misbehavior, Jim Francis did fail. He was put back one semester and we were no longer classmates. To be fair, I can’t blame Miss Benny. I was disruptive, unfocused, and shoddy in my schoolwork.

I remember a grade-school punishment for misbehavior was the relocation of your desk to a corner where you sat staring at the wall. That happened to me once. After my penalty week, Miss Benny said I could scoot my desk and join the class again. I was honest. I replied that I preferred the solitude of the corner. My introverted personality—later identified as INTJ— was already established.

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My parents were permissive toward Frank and me. We were never rebellious, did okay in school, so they left us to our own devices. Our table manners were atrocious. We seldom combed our hair or brushed our teeth.

I can still remember a dreaded date. I held a note from our local dentist, Dr. Vukovich, dated February 24, 1959. That was the day when I would have to walk into his office, sit in his waiting room, and submit to the extraction of a decayed molar. I remember the sights, sound, feel, taste, and smell. I remember walking home, turning my gaze away from people I met. With Novocain pumped into my gums, I thought my jaw was swollen to twice its size. When I looked in the mirror at home, I was shocked to see my familiar nine-year-old face.

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In 1959 Jack and Eileen were both teenagers, deep into popular music. They bought dozens of 45s such as: *Poison Ivy*; *Go Jimmy Go*; *Sixteen Candles*; *Mack the Knife*; and *La Bomba*. Our transistor radios were always tuned to WLS-AM from Chicago. Eileen collected the *Silver Dollar Survey* listing the top forty songs. Rock and Roll seeped into my brain and never drained out.

Jack was also buying comedy 33 rpm albums by the likes of Jonathan Winters and Andy Griffith. When I wasn't watching television, I heard the tunes and laughed to the humor. How could we possibly find time for homework?

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My summers were wide open—about eighty days of unsupervised unstructured time. Both Jacky and Jimmy preferred our home to their own, so they hung out at the Foremans watching TV and playing around the house. A hundred steps away and across the alley lay a vacant lot we called *Brown Field*. This quarter acre of dirt and weeds was our stomping ground. We dug holes, threw rocks at cans, and catapulted objects high into the sky. It was also a haven for bugs and toads.

One summer day we discovered that Brown Field was losing its toad population. We attempted to replenish the stock by visiting a distant field we dubbed "Toad Field". Four of us filled up a red wagon with the little creatures. We had to be careful, because we heard if a toad peed on you, you could get warts. We pulled our livestock down several blocks to Brown Field. One kid would pull while three hand-lifted escaping toads back into the wagon. We offloaded most of our cargo, but it was to no avail. The next day all the toads had vanished.

On July 4, 1959, the stars of Alaska and Hawaii were added to the American flag. Eileen came up with a brilliant idea for the Whiting Independence Day parade competition. She dressed me as Uncle Sam to march in the center. Frankie rode a tricycle to my left dressed as an Eskimo and Debbie rode to my right arrayed as little Miss Hawaii. We were awarded second place and won ten dollars.

During this same month, I received word that my first nephew—James Alan Walker—had been born in far-off Anaheim, California. Charlotte brought him to Whiting a few months later for all to see.

During that summer there was a plague of mosquitoes and city workers ran trucks down our streets spewing thick billows of DDT. Jacky, Jimmy, and I trailed behind these trucks on our bikes inhaling fumes and pretending we were pilots in a cloud bank. The frustrated driver would hop out on occasion to yell at us stupid kids. We fell back a while, then followed again. It's a wonder we ever survived into adulthood.

I also played with liquid mercury. Once dad brought home a baby jar half-filled with quicksilver. It became a toy, like my slinky. I'd pour out a puddle on the kitchen table, separate it into beads, then push the beads back into a glob. I would squeeze silver dimes and quarters with the substance, bringing them to a high shine. After a few days, the coins turned dull. I even took the stuff to school for show and tell. The toxic substance was no big deal at the time.

On hot days Eileen would walk with Frank and me to Wolf Lake. It was about twenty minutes one way. The sand scorched and the fudgesicles cost seven cents each. We played and splashed for hours. On one walk Eileen asked me if I knew the longest word in the English language. She said it was "antidisestablishmentarianism". I said, "Oh, yeah. How about 'Eeny-meeny-tipsy-teeny, apple-jack john sweeny, hokey pokey dominoky, out goes Y-O-U in the middle of the deep dark blue sea with a dishrag wrapped around your knee'?"

Eileen was incredulous and said "that's not a word"! She patiently explained to me the difference between syllables and words. I played dumb. I knew it wasn't a word, but it flustered Eileen.

On another walk home, Eileen picked a handful of stickers next to Wolf Lake. She carried them nearly home and threw them onto the lawn of Mr. Cruell across the street from us. She said it was revenge because Mr. Cruell had always been so mean to our dog Cookie.

Jack got a motor scooter when he turned sixteen. It was kind of a misbegotten motorcycle. The color was called "maroon". (That was the first time I heard the word.) It had a big square open box in the front and a push horn that went "UU GAH". I was so proud when Jack rode me around the block. I would duck down inside the box and then pop up fast to wave at my amazed friends. Sometimes Frank would be in the box with me and sometimes Jim Francis. "UU GAH" became a special signal between Jim and me.

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In the Autumn kids at school began to talk about baseball. I didn't know about the sport but since it was a topic of childhood conversation, I was pulled along as a fan. The talk was thick because the Chicago White Sox had won the American League pennant. Like all my boy peers, I followed and discussed every game. Alas, the LA Dodgers won the World Series, but in the process, I became a baseball aficionado.

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Whiting had a rhythm of seasons: baby birds and blossoms in the Spring; mowing lawns and lake swimming in the Summer; raking leaves and back to school in the Autumn. Nothing marked the change of season as definitely as the first snow of winter.

Burdened by homework drudgery, I stare out my window between arithmetic problems. Almost done, almost dark, almost time for bed, I see artful frost etching corners of the glass. Lost in subtraction, pencil on lined paper, I glance up from my dreary task.

Swirling in the street lamp, dancing through the air, winter's first burst of snow invites me out to play. Slamming the textbook and bumping the table, I erupt from my wooden chair. Grabbing my coat and flush with excitement, I shout "Oh, boy! Oh boy!" and dash for the door.

Mom is smiling. “Don’t stay out too long.” She turns on the porch light and pulls up my mittens. Chasing flakes like a kitten after yarn, I drag my galoshes, kicking patterns on the sidewalk. Lost in the snow, feet on white carpet, I play in my kingdom until my fingers grow numb.

### **1960 up to June**

In fifth grade I was blessed with my first male school teacher. Mr. Thomas was stocky, commanding, and good hearted. As a boy, I could finally identify with a role model of my own gender. Mr. Thomas was a former Marine and would relish leading his class in singing the Marine Corps Hymn. Occasionally a few of us ornery boys would substitute the word “corpse” for “corps”. He would glare at the offenders, but I knew a smile lurked behind the scowl.

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On January 15, 1960, my parents celebrated their silver wedding anniversary. About a dozen friends were over the house to mark their twenty-five years together. I remember helping Eileen glue twenty-five silver dollars onto construction paper to form the digits two and five. The official photograph shows a family of thirteen: John, Jenny, Jeanne, Don, Debbie, Susie, Charlotte, Big Jim, Jimmy, Jack, Eileen, Chris, and Frank.

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It seemed dad was always tinkering with the house. In the basement he installed a second toilet and a shower stall. Those additions were mostly for Jack, but they proved useful to Frank and me as well. Dad also improved the attic, constructing one long corridor with mats for sleeping at either end by the gabled windows. He paneled the peaked ceiling and installed book shelves along the entire length of the corridor. The bonus space was too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter, but year-round it was a great place to hang out with friends.

When dad re-furbished the attic stairway, he uncovered a lost treasure. Beneath the bottom tread lay a pound of sugar, a box of baseball cards, and a ration coupon book. Mom recognized it right away. “During the war we all hid things away like that.”

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In school I was an average achiever. The one subject in which I truly excelled was geography. I could recite all the states and capitols. I collected maps pulled from National Geographic. In May I received an award from the Daughters of the American Revolution at a school assembly. My name was called and I walked to the stage for my plaque. Both mom and dad were proud of their son and took a dozen pictures.

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In the Spring of 1960 Frank and I began to follow Major League baseball in earnest. He was an LA Dodgers fan with Sandy Colfax as his favorite and I was a Milwaukee Braves fan, favoring Warren Spahn. From the Hammond Times we snipped out Major League Standings and every day pasted them into notebooks. Frank kept detailed statistics of the sixteen teams.

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By 1960, I saw less of Jack. He was hanging out at the bowling alley and rolling cigarette packs in his shirt sleeve. Frank and I grew closer to Eileen. After meals we had a routine. Eileen would wash dishes, Frank would dry, and I would put away.

During the several years we did this—until she left the home—Eileen taught Frank and me crazy songs. This one, taken from Mad Magazine, we sang to the tune of the Air Force anthem, *Up We Go*:

Up we go into that wide mouth yonder looking for molars to fill.  
There's a tooth waiting to hear our thunder. At 'em boys.  
Give 'em the drill, RATA-TAT-TAT.  
We dislike cavities left untreated. Teeth look bad full of decay.  
When we're in doubt, we pull 'em out. Oh, nothing can stop a dentist today.

Little did Frank know when he sang that song, he would be both an Air Force officer and a practicing dentist.

Some songs were passed along by house guests. We learned this parody to *Back Home Again in Indiana*:

Back home again in dear old Whiting and it seems that I can see  
the electric lights still shining bright o'er Lake Michigan for me.  
And Amazo sends out its fragrance o'er the streets I used to roam.  
And when I dream about the whistle blown at midnight, then I long for my dear old Whiting home.

Eileen also taught us to recite the sixty-six books of the Bible, from Genesis all the way to Revelation. Frank and I got so proficient that we would challenge each other. He'd say, "Can you name all the books in one breath?"

I would fill my lungs and after sixty-five books, squeak out *Revelation*. Then I would challenge Frank. "Can you name all the books of the Bible in one breath while hopping on one foot?" And Frank could do it. What fun to have a little brother like Frank. What joy to have a big sister like Eileen.

Looking back at my first decade of life, I can say that my entire family—dad, mom, Jeanne, Charlotte, Jack, Eileen, and Frank—all did their parts to create a joyful and godly environment to "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)"

## 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)”*

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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.

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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 Thickens, 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.

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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?

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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.

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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*.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.”

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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

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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?

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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.

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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.

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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”.

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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?

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

## Chapter 5

# Fledged

*beginning on November 22, 1963  
and continuing for 3 years, 10 months, and 12 days*

*“I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you,  
and you have overcome the evil one (1 John 2:14).”*

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When plumage first appears on a bird, it remains bound to its nest and the feathered creature is termed a fledgling. In my early teens, I was acquiring adult plumage and was beginning to stray from my comfortable nest.

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November 22, 1963, began as a typical eight-grade day. I had just returned to school after lunch and was sitting in math class. The voice of our school principle sounded over the loudspeaker, announcing an immediate assembly in the auditorium. As the hallways filled with students, I heard whispers that President Kennedy had been shot; maybe he was dead.

Teachers were in tears as students took their seats. The principal announced from the podium “President Kennedy has died. Teachers and students, please take off the rest of the day, watch television for the news, and we will see you tomorrow morning.” That completed the assembly. We walked home in a daze.

News flashed across the airwaves. I saw Lyndon Johnson sworn in as president, Lee Harvey Oswald marched past reporters, and Jack Ruby pump bullets into Oswald. The planet seemed to careen out of orbit.

Then followed a state funeral with little John John saluting a flag-draped coffin. My family bought the *Kennedy Memorial* album and ditched the frivolous *First Family*.

Looking back, the Kennedy assassination marked a boundary. The Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations encompassed my boyhood while Johnson and Nixon demarcated my youth.

After watching endless TV coverage of the Kennedy assassination, I began to follow national events. The Vietnam war was heating up and Walter Cronkite began to present his nightly scoreboard: number of Americans killed, wounded, and MIA; number of South Vietnamese and Viet Cong killed.

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I was getting involved in top forty music. Jim really liked *Surfin' Bird* and could mimic all the goofy sound effects. Frank and I began acquiring our own forty-five records, splitting the one-dollar cost. As the calendar flipped into 1964 my adolescent world was rocked by four lads from Liverpool.

### 1964

The first time I heard *I Want to Hold your Hand*, I sensed my paradigm shift. The beat exuded youthful energy and the shaggy hair hinted at rebellion. Beatlemania spread like a pandemic among American youth and I caught a high-grade fever.

It is difficult to explain the spell the Beatles cast over me. After watching my idols perform on the Ed Sullivan Show, I purchased every album the Beatles ever released. And they were gigantic, monopolizing the top five slots on American pop charts. I was obsessed, wanting to play their music, dress like them, and be them.

As a matter of fact, I did become John Lennon. Our music teacher staged an operetta and wasn't recruiting boys. Jim suggested she allow a Beatles tribute band to perform on stage. And so, I became John, Jim played Paul, Cary was George, and Botch was Ringo. "The College Beatles" strummed the instruments and lip-synced *She Loves You*- yeah, yeah, yeah. As a fourteen-year-old devotee, nothing could have been groovier.

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When classes started in January, I found myself in the third semester of eighth grade. School authorities wanted us mid-terms to either advance to the class ahead or regress to the one behind. Since I was an athlete, I elected to redshirt a semester and graduate from High School in 1968 rather than 1967. I was ineligible to play sports from January to June.

Without basketball or track, my class load was light. I listened to hours of Beatles music and hits from groups in the British Invasion: The Rolling Stones, Dave Clark Five, and Kinks.

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Our fountain of coolness was WLS radio. Frank and I began to collect the weekly Silver Dollar Survey and tick-mark the forty-fives we had purchased. Every evening at ten, WLS would unveil "the top three most requested songs in Chicagoland". Frank kept a binder of top-three statistics.

Cassius Clay was also a source of entertainment. His February knockout of Sonny Liston combined prowess with humor. I chuckled as Howard Cosell played the boxer's straight man. I monitored the ups and downs of Cassius Clay/Muhammad Ali over the next fourteen years.

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Charlotte and Jim moved into the back apartment with little Jimmy and baby Shelley. I relished my role as Uncle Chris. My career goal was never to become a doctor or lawyer, but a family man. I aspired to find a good woman and rear children. Debbie, Susie, Nancy, Jimmy and Shelly filled my life with joy.

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In the summer of sixty-four, I was also into pogo sticks. I managed to bounce all around the block. Our private rules allowed us to pause at each corner and lean against a lamp post. Frank won this contest with three complete laps.

My parents bowled in a summer church league and I learned the sport by substituting for an absent adult. My average was around 90, but I once bowled a 150 game. On an equal footing with adults, I felt grown up.

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I continued to be a big Beatles fan. Jim, Frank, and I walked to the Hoosier Theater to see *A Hard Day's Night*. The British humor zoomed over my head. A few days before school started, I peddled my bike around the block shouting to any within earshot, "I'm going to see the Beatles".

On September 5, Eileen drove Frank, Jim, and me to the International Amphitheater in Chicago. It was crazy. From our cheap seats we could barely see the Fab Four prancing on stage and we couldn't hear a word of song.

Female shrieking shattered my ears. Jim stacked chairs to get a better view but tumbled to the ground. Dozens of girls swooned and were carted out on stretchers. Sensible Eileen was disappointed but I was thrilled to be a part of this cultural phenomenon.

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As school kicked off in the fall of 1964, I was a high school freshman. My class of 1968 swelled by one hundred after an influx of parochial-school students. I made lots of new friends and gawked at new girls.

My classes were new too. I took English lit, German, typing, biology, and geometry. I remember my theological reflections in geometry. I learned a straight horizontal line with end dots indicated a line segment; a line with an arrow at each end stood for an infinite line; and a line with a left dot and a right arrow indicated a start point but no end point.

My argument was with my scientific classmate, Reinhard. I contended that the double-ended arrow represented God and the right-ended arrow man. He argued in the actual universe everything is a line segment, passing into and out of existence.

I noted as freshman football began that my size and speed were being challenged. Other guys were getting bigger and hairier than me. A few from the influx outplayed me. I settled for defensive safety and did all the kicking.

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My dad loved gadgets. He was early to buy a movie camera, Polaroid camera (with the goop), and color TV. He now acquired a large real-to-reel tape player, wanting to record church events. However, Frank and I appropriated the bulky machine, recording rock songs from the radio.

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The year ended with a new nephew. When Don John Zelen was born on December 31, the Beatles topped the charts with a two-sided hit: *She's a Woman/I Feel Fine*.

## 1965

My parents remained perplexed by my obsession with popular music. Yet they were indulgent. In 1965 my dad was employed at Youngstown Steel and, through job contacts, he was able to buy tickets to pop concerts. Frank, Eileen, and I went to see several rock shows in Chicago. Slip covers from 45 records plastered one wall in the living room. When adult visitors noted the unusual pastiche, my dad would comment, "Oh, it's just a phase they're going through."

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My basketball season began in January and I played forward for the freshman Clark Pioneers. I failed to display the talent or motivation to make the starting five and played about half the minutes. I was too sanguine to excel in aggressive sports.

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About that time, Don Zelen accepted a position with Reynolds Aluminum and the Zelen family of six relocated to Lisle, Illinois. I missed that big chunk of my extended family. We made occasional visits—it was only an hour's drive—but I perceived my close-knit world was unraveling.

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On February first, Frank picked up the telephone to hear an unfamiliar voice. He shouted out, “Hey Eileen, some guy named Harry Zipperman wants to talk to you.” Terry later told me he was so embarrassed by that mangling of his name that he almost hung up the phone. And so, Airman Terry Zimmerman entered our life as Eileen's new boyfriend.

To accommodate her need for private conversations, dad bought Eileen an extra-long coiled cord that stretched neck-high from the wall near the kitchen into her bedroom. It proved to be a strangulation device as I dashed through the house.

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I was a star in track even as a freshman. I broad-jumped over twenty feet and high-jumped five-feet nine inches. I also ran fourth leg in the eight-eighty relay. I earned medals and ribbons galore. I clipped track reports from the Hammond Times and saved them in a binder. I earned a Clark varsity letter in track which mom sewed onto my C-club jersey.

Sports finally ended my regular participation in Boy Scouts. I remember saying to Coach Powell, “About this Saturday track meet? I have a hike with the Scouts. Is it okay if I skip this one?”

He was understanding. “Chris”, he said, “Scouts is a good thing. I'm all for it, but you have to understand if you're on my track team, I need you for every meet. Why don't you talk to your dad about it”? I had the talk and skipped the scout hike.

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I became an uncle once more. Herman's Hermits were singing *Mrs. Brown You've got a Lovely Daughter* when Chris John Walker was born in May. Now two nephews and one niece were living in the back apartment.

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In June I attended two summer-school classes. I was eager to drive a car and took driver's training. I earned my learner's permit and Eileen let me drive around town. I also took advanced biology. I joined up with Eric Tangelos and we scoured the neighborhood to build a large insect collection.

I enjoyed learning for learning's sake whether it be academic or Biblical. In my church youth group, I created charts of Adam, Eve, and their descendants, while in biology class I wrote about Cro-Magnon man. In my bifurcated world Adam and Troglodyte existed hand in hand.

Once when I was talking to Frank at the dinner table, dad interrupted, “Chris, how can you believe that nonsense about monkeys evolving into people?”

I responded with academic arrogance, “I don't. But it seems true that men and monkeys derive from a common ancestor.”

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In August our family drove to Texas to visit my two uncles. Both Stutz and Joe had retired from the Air Force and both had resettled in San Antonio. We brought along my Grandpa Dydek to re-connect with his two sons. This was my first trip west of the Mississippi River. I remember paddle boats on canals, the Alamo, and a dash across the border into Mexico. I also remember the Beach Boys singing *Help Me, Rhonda*.

---

Frank and I attended our second Beatles concert on August 20. Eileen drove us to Comiskey Park in Chicago. With 37,000 in attendance, we cheered through hits like *Ticket to Ride* and *Twist and Shout*. This time there was an ad campaign on WLS radio called “don’t scream” and we were able to hear most of the songs.

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As summer was ending, Frank was still advancing in Boy Scouts. He was striving for his God and Country award. Dad suggested we get the award together, so for a few months we met with George Davis and learned the rudiments of our denomination. The official photograph shows me standing about eight inches taller than Frank as we pose together with the preacher. After twenty-eight merit badges and an Eagle with bronze palm, I stopped striving.

---

When school started up in September, I began my sophomore year. I considered myself more of a jock than an academic. I played football for the B-squad and participated in several games. The cyclic rhythm of football-basketball-track seemed as natural to me as autumn-winter-spring. I never considered dropping any sport.

Although I was capable, I never strove for academic distinction. To me and my parents, average was normal and normal was desirable. In any case, I was too involved in sports, watched too much television, and listened to too much rock music to make any honor roll. It was not my priority at the time.

---

At fifty years old, dad was still laboring at Youngstown Steel. I remember his routine. He would open the back door about five-thirty. Mom was usually in the kitchen cooking dinner. She would greet him with a kiss as he set his empty lunch pail on the counter. Any children around would greet him as he walked toward the bathroom to clean up.

After a few minutes, he would emerge in fresh clothes and ask us about our day. He kept a mat behind the couch and would lie on the floor. He said he needed to stretch his back. When mom called us to dinner, he would rise and stow the mat. Eileen had set the table for five and we all ate together, engaging in conversation.

Meal portions were generous and food hardy. Mom was a good cook. She typically served a central meat dish—one piece per person, beef, pork chops, or chicken. There were always potatoes, vegetables from a can, bread, sometimes rice or pasta. The only ethnic food we consumed on a regular basis was sauerkraut. Oftentimes there were sweets for dessert. Fruit, salad, and cold cuts were reserved for the lunch menu.

After the meal, we continued the tradition of Eileen washing the dishes, Frank drying, and me putting away. My sister always led us in songs or recitations. An hour after supper, dad would pull the chains on the coo-coo clock, winding it for another twenty-four hours.

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For Christmas, Eileen bought Frank and me a nifty 45 rpm record player. It was battery operated and the records clicked into and out of a playing port. It was so cool to listen to my music sitting on the school steps. It also attracted girls. Eileen hit a home run with that gift.

## 1966

In the first week of January, dad drove me to the DMV. At sixteen, I was finally eligible for my driver's license. I passed the written test with a near perfect score. When I finished the driving portion, the man said, "You're a good little driver, but I could fail you on this test".

Although, I had clicked the signal at every turn, I failed to use my hand gestures out of the open window, as the book proscribed. He said he could have deducted points for every turn, but he only docked me for the first mistake and I passed with a 92 of 100.

Jim Francis got his license about the same time, but he was into motorcycles and acquired his first Honda.

---

In January, basketball season picked up again. I played junior-varsity and at six foot I had leaping skills. I could stand under the hoop, jump straight up and touch the rim with both hands. Coach Dougherty was always screaming at me to be more aggressive. I guess I lacked the killer instinct. I figured I was like Ferdinand the bull; big and powerful, but content to lie in the grass and watch the world at whim.

In mid-February, track began. Although Clark High School fielded a freshman-sophomore team, I ran varsity. I was the premier high jumper and competed with Bob Bobbin for first spot in broad jump. Again, I ran fourth leg in the half-mile relay. After a mediocre football season and poor basketball season, track re-built my athletic esteem.

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Rinehart taught me how to play chess. I was a quick learner and we would spend our study hall moving pieces around the board. He usually won the match. I never book-studied the game, except for one move, the Fool's Mate. Rinehart was so shocked when I shouted "checkmate" after my black made two moves: e5-Qh4.

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In my church youth group, Mister Davis railed against rock music. He claimed it had no redeeming value. I brought in my copy of the Bird's *Turn, Turn, Turn*. The lyrics were directly taken from the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes. He listened but said he couldn't understand a word of the gibberish. Talk about a generation gap!

---

On Sunday, February 27, I began writing a one-year journal. I managed to fill a complete page of lined paper every day for the following 364 days. This is how the first day read:

Last night I stayed up 'til 3:00 playing chess with Mary Ann. I beat her three games to one. I was tired this morning for church. During church, I let Jimmer (Jimmy Walker) play with my ring and watch. Frank got sick at church so 'Neen (Eileen) took him home. Had a good lunch. Lone Ranger today was in color—weird.

It is now 13 minutes to 3:00 p.m. Jimmer is sitting across from me. He just drank part of my coke. Mom and dad are getting dressed to visit some people at the hospital. Frank is talking to Pig (Jim Francis) about *Ivanhoe*. They're sitting on the couch. Jim has to turn in his book report for his English teacher. A basketball game is on TV. Jimmer is now playing with my diaries. I'll let him sign his name. JIMMY W.

Mom just read the above and she said, "Put down there you should be going to the singspiration."

7:00 p.m. – Helped Jimmer paint his jeep gold and silver because we were painting this diary. When I came home from church with Jim in the evening, I asked Jimmer if his jeep was still wet. He said, "No, but my fingers are." Dad let me drive the car to church and back. I'm watching Ed Sullivan. Jimmer is driving his jeep around the rug; Frank is reading my diary and Jim is writing in his new one. 10:32 – I just decided to take a bubble bath. The high today was 37 and low at 28.

As I peruse the thirty-one pages of March, 1966, several things strike me. First, I find it incredible how much television I consumed. On March 8, I listed ten consecutive shows: 5:00-Garfield Goose, 5:45-News, 6:00-Bullwinkle, 6:30-My Mother the Car, 7:00-Don't Eat the Daisies, 7:30-Dobie Gillis, 8:00-F Troop, 8:30-Twilight Zone, 9:00-The Fugitive. It wasn't that I sat staring at the screen for five hours, but the boob tube constantly flickered and chattered in the background.

Second, I had forgotten how the three Walker kids co-inhabited my space. Jimmy at age six, Shelly at three, and Chrissy at nine months, were continually under foot. Charlotte popped in and out while Big Jim dropped by occasionally. I grew to love children and wished for my own.

Third, I participated in a track meet once a week. I recall the ribbons and medals, but had forgotten the anxiety and anticipation. I did not recall the day-to-day butterflies in competitive track.

Fourth, I forgot about our single bath tub. On Saturday evening, five of us would take consecutive baths—not showers. The order was Eileen, Chris, Frank; then later Mom and Dad. I marvel that in 1966 it seemed so natural.

---

In science class, Eric and I teamed up for a project. Together we built an incubator of wood, wire, and shredded newspaper; then we split a dozen fertilized chicken eggs. With a light bulb to provide heat, we watched the drama of life unfold. Unfortunately, our cooperation turned into competition. Each of us wanted to hatch the first chick.

When my first hatchling pecked through the shell, I grew impatient and "helped" it by pulling some shell fragments away from featherless flesh. I claimed I won the contest, but my poor baby bird bore wounds from where I pulled skin away. I felt bad and learned a lesson in patience. There are some things in nature you just can't hurry along.

---

As I study the months of April and May in my 1966 journal, I discern four different groups of acquaintances that seldom overlapped. First was my academic clique. This was Reinhard, Eric, George, Lance, and a few others. I talked science and philosophy with them. When graduation time came, Eric was number one in the

class, Reinhard was number two, and George number five. I fit with this group, but I never focused enough to make the high marks they did. My semester grades were: History-A, English-B, German-B, Geometry-C.

A second group was the jocks. In the spring, these would consist of my track buddies: Rocky, Botch, Jim Ruf, Mike, Bob, and others. We spent hours together in practice, meets, and travel. Athlete buddies were different during the football and basketball season.

A third group was Boy Scouts. I was still involved in outings with Steve, Tex, Bob, Spike, and others.

Finally, a fourth group was from church, both boys and girls, who I saw only on Sundays. Other teenagers floated in and out of my life, but most could be placed in their proper sphere. Of course, Jim Francis was in a sphere without peer.

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Jim even participated in a scouting event. This outing involved a loose group of three fathers and six scouts who convoyed cars and canoes to Xenia, Ohio. Three boats were put in the water on Saturday morning and raced down the Little Miami River. Jim and I got stuck with the worst of three, an old wooden hulk. We struggled to paddle for a while, but realized we could not keep up with the lighter metal craft. So, Jim and I just enjoyed the eight miles of downstream flow, passing under bridges, and wading to shore on occasion. We spent one night in the big Canadian tent and got home on Sunday evening.

Jim skipped some of his fast-food meals, saying had to save his money to buy a fancy ring for his girlfriend, Peggy.

---

On June first, the transition from school time to summer vacation was dramatic. Classmates, homework, and sports, all melted away. I didn't try to fill the chasm. I loafed more, slept more, and got bored on occasion. But events soon picked up. Eileen was to be married in a few weeks. Mom had me cleaning the house day after day. I greeted Terry when he arrived on June 8 from an Air Force leave. We all bought new clothes and visited the First Church of Christ for planning sessions.

A few months earlier, Don Zelen was once again promoted. The family now resided in Alabama. They called it "the heart of Dixie". The six of them arrived on June 16 from their new home in Florence. Below is a transcript of Eileen's wedding day, Saturday, June 18, 1966

Mom got me up at 10:30. I wanted to sleep later but mom needed me to help her get ready. Watched a few cartoons and Dad got a little mad because he said it was such an important day. We started getting dressed at about 12:00. I didn't know how to put on my tux. A guy who was there taking pictures of 'Neen showed me. My cousins, the Seigenthalers, came over at 1:00. We took a lot of pictures on the front porch.

I left for the church at 1:15 in the station wagon. When I got there, I got a carnation to wear. Then I found the best man and Terry up in the preacher's office. We stayed there for about ten minutes joking about Terry's "misfortune".

At 1:30 we started to march out. First Mr. Davis, then following, Terry, the best man, and me. Once we were situated, Jimmer in his cute little tux came walking up and stood on a small piece of paper we stuck up there. Mary Ann came up slowly, then Janet, then the flower girls: Nancy and Shelley. Did they

go slow! Dad and Eileen had to start before the flower girls were set. George Butler sang before and during the ceremony (*Because*). Immediately after the wedding we went downstairs and stood in line. I can't begin to name all the people there I knew. I had a little punch, wedding cake and peanuts and then went outside. I threw some rice on Terry and 'Neen.

When I got home there were mobs of people in our little house. We had to fit some on the front porch. A rough estimate of people there is fifty-five. After I ate some ham and polish sausage and drank up a gallon of punch, I snuck up in the attic and slept 'til everyone was gone at 5:30. We saw Terry and 'Neen off to their honeymoon. They came back right away. 'Neen forgot her radio.

Watched Saturday Night at the Movies. It was Jerry Lewis in *Rockabye Baby*. Me and Deb left with mom and dad in the middle of it to go to the St. John panel room to see Dick Wetnight's wedding reception. Me and Deb left it because it was too loud. We watched *Broken Arrow* on the late show. Got to bed at 12:30.



The Zelen family stuck around in Whiting for ten more days, then they headed back to Alabama—but not without Frank and me. We enjoyed a great vacation from June 26 to July 30, which constituted my first sojourn into the deep south. I added three states to my travels. We lodged in Alabama, crossed into Mississippi for fireworks, and camped in the Florida panhandle.

Frank and I visited the Civil War Battlefield at Shiloh, Tennessee; climbed into the depths of a dank cave; exploded M-80s unattainable in Indiana; and splashed in swimming pools almost every day.

Soon after we arrived, Don joined an exclusive country club at Bailey Springs. On a typical day, we would do morning chores around the house. Then, after lunch, Jeanne would drive us to Bailey Springs for swimming, tennis, horseback riding, and just hanging out. Frank and I spent four nights in a country-club cabin where we collected weird-looking insects and listened to far-off WLS-AM radio.

As a sixteen-year-old, I was slow to get out of bed in the morning. Jeanne discovered an ingenious solution. She would unleash little DJ on me. After ignoring a few calls to breakfast, Don John would enter the room, growl at me, and bounce on the bed. A better alarm clock could not be imagined.

I grew close to Debbie, Susie, Nancy, and little DJ. For three weeks they were like my younger siblings. I was allowed to drive Don's car chauffeuring the kids from place to place. One day I wanted to show off my newly acquired driving skills to passengers Frank, Deb, and Nancy.

I drove the Chevy to Colonial Court, going uphill in drive and coming downhill in reverse. I lost control, bounced over a curb, then plunged down an embankment. I tried to extract the car by gunning the engine, then I put bricks under the back tires.

After I couldn't get the car out of the ditch, Frank walked home to speak to Jeanne. She arrived with a welcome mat, but after seeing the car, she phoned Don. When he arrived, I was surprised he wasn't too angry. He borrowed a friend's truck, but a towing rope snapped twice. Finally, he called a professional tow truck which extracted the Chevy back to the roadway. The muffler was ruined and the bumper suffered a small dent, but otherwise it was okay. The tow truck driver said if the car had progressed a few more inches down the hillside, it might have flipped over.



Dad and mom arrived in Florence on July 22. After a one-day pause we headed south to Panama City, Florida. Don pulled his Apache camping trailer and dad drove the station wagon. The gulf was azure and the sandy beach bright white. Mom and dad slept in their station wagon; Don, Jeanne, Nancy, Sue, and DJ in the Apache; Frank and Debbie in Zelen's station wagon; while I was stuck with a pup tent.

We spent four nights on the beach, running in the sand, collecting crab parts, and complaining about heat and mosquitoes. We all took a ferry to a place called Shell Island where I collected some near-perfect sand dollars. I also read Mitchener's book *Caravan* a few hours every day and Frank enjoyed surfing.

Just before driving north. Dad made Frank and me toss out our extensive crab part collection. Admittedly, it was getting stinky. We stopped off at Dothan, Birmingham, and Montgomery. Florence felt like home to me.

We devised one last project for the final five days in Alabama. Dad led in the construction of a back-yard tree house. Don did the buying and hauling; dad did the sawing and nailing; Frank and I did the painting. A photograph shows ten of us smiling over the treehouse rail. This backyard feature was well-built and massive. In 1968, when the Zelens sold the house, Jeanne told me it was the treehouse that clenched the deal.

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When we arrived in Whiting, much had changed. Frank and I moved into Eileen's refurbished bedroom and Walkers were established on Sheridan avenue. Jim (the pig) told me two pieces of news. He had a new girlfriend named Jeannie Grinstead and Jim Buckner from school had blown off two fingers with a cherry bomb. Listening to Jim's conversation, I felt the comfort of home again.

---

When August arrived, I went to work. I was striving to save money for a 1967 trip to Germany. The work I found was at Mrs. Zimmerman's house in Hammond. For two weeks I labored painting her porches, pillars, window trim, and outside floors. I also removed and cleaned windows and screens. Mom drove me on a few occasions, but mostly I took the bus. Jim Francis helped a few times. I earned \$76 for all the work.

My activities changed after August 15 when football practice began. The summer schedule went like this: I got up at 7:30, drank a glass of milk, and rested until 8:20. I walked the twelve minutes to Clark Field and got on my sweats. We ran laps and did calisthenics under the direction of a senior student, then I lunched at home. In the afternoon, coaches showed up. We scrimmaged, learned plays, and did various reaction drills. This summer practice schedule lasted until Labor Day.

August 30 was a good day for both Frank and me. My brother had been buying Marvel comic books for a few months already. Mom drove to a trailer court where a man was unloading his extensive collection. Frank bought ninety Marvel comic books for three dollars. He was ecstatic. His prize was Daredevil #2. Over the next few months, Frank studied these books, sorting and cataloging.

On the same day, I played in an exhibition football game called the Football-o-rama. Four high-school teams competed. I performed well, making six tackles, and running the ball a few times. Coach Peterson said I had improved. I had earned a starting position.

My football world crashed ten days later when I started at defensive halfback but made no tackles in the first half. I was pulled out and scolded by the coaches. For the rest of the season, I was relegated to kick-offs and punts. I was discouraged and nearly quit a few times.

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My five classes in eleventh grade were: German with Mrs. Calvert, Latin with Mrs. Wilcox, History with Mr. Roman, Physics with Mr. Watkins, and Advanced Algebra with Mr. Aldridge. In spite of too much football and television, I managed to earn an A in history and B's in the other three.

Mr. Roman taught me a valuable lesson. He required a daily one-page report on the reading material. We turned in our new assignments before every class and received our previous day's work. When I saw my paper come back with a big F, I belly ached to the teacher. He said, "Read the instructions! It says 'one page only' so I didn't read your sentences on page two". I was upset, but I learned the value of following instructions. I didn't make that mistake again.

On September 15, my journal contains this note: "Let's see. At 7:30, I watched *Star Trek*. I think it's gonna be one of the better shows of the season." On September 26, a note reads, "Mom got a letter from Eileen. 'Neen is suspecting".

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In October, my busy life continued. I studied Latin and German simultaneously, reading about Julius Caesar and Wilhelm Tell. A big part of algebra and physics involved memorizing mathematical formulae. In history I recited big chunks of the U.S. constitution for extra credit.

Football continued to be an aggravation. I dressed for varsity games on Friday evening without getting my uniform scuffed. Then I played every minute of B-squad on Saturday morning, muddied from head to toe.

Dad decided to enroll both Frank and me in a Judo class which met at the Hammond civic center. We attended about eight evening sessions. I was big enough to win many matches, but didn't learn many moves. I did earn an orange belt before we lost interest.

Dad bought a second car for \$180, a 1961 Ford Falcon. From that point, Mom only drove the station wagon, while dad and I shared the Ford. I was constantly driving Walker kids, football friends, and Frank to various activities. The Falcon was odd in that it had a "warm up" button. You couldn't just crank the ignition. The spark plugs needed ten seconds to heat.

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At the end of October, the family planned a quick trip to Alabama. For the occasion, Frank and I bought belated birthday presents for Deb, Susie, and Nancy. We went to the department store and couldn't decide what to get for Deb. All of the Halloween merchandise was on display so I decided to buy her a Ouija board. I figured it was like our Scrabble game, only spookier. Mom and I worked the board that evening and it predicted Eileen's baby would arrive on April 23.

Over the next few days, Frank and I plied the Ouija board with question after question. My brother said it was scary. I knew for certain that my fingers were not directing that heart-shaped pointer and I studied Frank's closed eyes and could swear he was not choosing the letters. How then did this amazing board operate?

We left Whiting on Thursday about 11:00 P.M. and arrived in Florence about noon the next day. Eight of us packed into one station wagon: Dad, mom, me, Frank, Char, Jimmer, Shelley, and CJ. In the afternoon, we gave the Zelen kids their presents.

I gave Deb the Ouija board after dinner. That's all we did until 11:00. Here are some of the question and answers.

Frank: "Where is Dare Devil #7?" ~ "In the attic under the bed, Frank F."

Char: "Where is Jim?" ~ "Don't worry. He is where you want him to be."

Deb: "How long will the Zelens live here?" ~ "Six months longer than six years."

Chris: "Will I go to Germany next summer?" ~ "Yes."

The last question Deb and I asked was: "Do you want us to sleep?"

The response was "Yes, very much so. Go to bed please." The pointer really paused on each of those twenty-six letters!

As I processed my short encounter with that uncanny board, I asked myself. "If neither Deb nor I manipulated the pointer, then what source provided the articulate answers?" I intuited three things. First, the source had to be supernatural. Second, it was not all-knowing because answers were often wrong. Third, the power behind the Ouija board was not heavenly. The God of the Bible would not move a child's fingers along a painted surface.

The Ouija board provided me with first-hand evidence that a transcendent realm does exist. Materialism became forever an alien philosophy to my reason. Odd to say, but in my life, God used an occult means to bring about a heavenly end.



Soon it was time for basketball. All the fun had left the sport. I played second string on the B-squad. One Saturday I missed the bus for a game in far-off South Bend. To my surprise, dad offered to drive me. Coach Dougherty was so impressed, he made me captain for that game. But after only two points in the first half, I was yanked out.

A few weeks after that, I mustered the courage to talk with the coach. There was no joy and little prospect in basketball. He respected the face-to-face interview saying most players would just stop showing up. When, I returned home, I felt a burden lift from my shoulders. I began running "winter track" and joy quickened my pace.



In November, joy leapt into exuberance; a girl entered my life. This is a note from November 16: "I knew something was funny when I saw Jim's face with a big smile on it and sure enough, he and Jeannie had Debbie Argus there. So, I talked with her a while, only I was a little embarrassed."

At first, I conversed with Debbie as an acquaintance of Jim and Jeannie, then the three of us went to her house. I discovered that Debbie was one class behind me and the younger sister of Bob, a fellow Boy Scout. Her family attended the local Congregational church—where the scouts met. She seemed perfect.

I wanted to call her, but I had a severe case of phone-phobia. After three days of Jim's urging, I dialed 659-6711. Debbie answered and we talked for an hour. I learned she played the clarinet, ice skated, and her favorite Beatles song was *Here, There, and Everywhere*. I accepted her invitation to attend a winter formal called the sub-deb. When I told my parents, they were surprised saying they'd have to teach me manners.

We continued our phone conversations, sometimes talking over two hours. I felt alive to the marrow, walking Debbie home after school, carrying her books, and sharing her umbrella. My world sparkled with hope.

On December 9, just as I was getting to know her, my world shattered. With eyes downcast she whispered, "We're moving to Virginia at the end of the semester." I was devastated. I stumbled home in a light snow, didn't eat dinner, and tried to sleep off the awful news.

My life was a roller coaster for the next few months. Debbie truly liked me and I became obsessed with her. Teenage passion drew us together, while common sense pushed us apart. One moment we were all cuddles and hugs while the next we argued about me getting too close. Debbie's father tried to cool our jets by setting strict rules for her behavior. I would ask, "Why can't I put my arm around you?"

She would reply, "My father said we shouldn't do that." And thus, the next six weeks unfolded. Desire battled self-discipline which equaled frustration.

I saw Debbie every day at school. We hung out in German club and I snuck in to see her play clarinet. When we didn't meet, we spoke on the phone. Finally, after Charlotte couldn't contact the house, my dad dictated a phone limit of thirty minutes.

My journal is filled with confessions of love for Debbie. I wrote it in German: *Ich liebe dich*, and I confessed in Latin: *semper amabo Debram*. I had built my world around this girl even as I foresaw my world crashing to the ground.

The sub-deb finally arrived on December 22. My shoes were polished, my suit was pressed, my heart was full, and her corsage was in my hand. Dad let me borrow the station wagon for the night. I first drove to the Argus home and exchanged carnations. We chatted and posed for pictures. Then I drove to the Grinsted's to pick up Jim and Jeannie. I returned to my house for more pictures.

We arrived at Vogel's Restaurant at 9:20. The refreshments, slow dancing, and romancing, lasted until 11:30. We drove around for a while and ended up at Jeannie's house for pizza. I didn't want the evening to end, but I dropped Debbie off at 2:30 a.m. Her brother and mother were waiting up for her. The delight of the night ended in sobs as I fell into bed knowing this joy was terminal.

Mother invited Debbie to our house for my seventeenth birthday. After cake and song, she presented me with a brass bracelet engraved with *Chris*. I couldn't take my eyes off her, hardly acknowledging the presence of family. Charlotte said I was *twitterpated*. I spent the moment of 1966/1967 on the telephone with Debbie.

### **1967 to October**

After Christmas break, we returned to school to complete the Fall semester. I began a countdown. As a hopeless romantic, I believed that love could conquer all, but love did not hold back the tide of time. The days ticked by.

I did not behave well. I wanted to possess her and her to love me. I perceived a void that only Debbie could fill. I pouted, clinging to this fifteen-year-old girl as a drowning man clings to a life boat. I discovered no magic to prevent her relocation to Virginia. And yet a minor miracle did occur.

The Argus family had planned their departure for January 27. However, on the evening of the 26<sup>th</sup> snow began to fall in Whiting and after thirty-three straight hours, over three feet had accumulated. Roads and airports were closed down. Did God answer my prayer?

School was cancelled and after shoveling my own sidewalks, I phoned Deb. Yes, they had to postpone their departure. Yippee! I asked if I could help clear her driveway. After an okay from her dad, I leapt through snowdrifts to reach her. Deb met me outside decked in snow gear, her cheeks rosy. We laughed as I flung snow in every direction. I was invited inside to warm up and reality struck. I saw her house filled with boxes and draped furniture.

Misery filled the next few days. I was angry at God. I wrote Debbie a long letter filled with the pain of our separation. I determined to become “a martyr for love’s sake”.

January 30 was her last day in town. I walked to her house with a stool and sat across the street just to catch a final glimpse of her beauty. After two hours she never showed her face, so I stuck my ugly missive into her mail box and trudged home. I never saw Deb or heard from her again.

I felt heartsick at her loss. A diary couplet encapsulated my teen-age angst: “I love a girl named Deb. The worst happened the thing I most dread. She moved far away, leaving me here to stay, and now I wish I were dead”.

In retrospect, I see that Christian love cannot describe my relationship to Debbie. My hungry heart did not wish the best outcome for her. Rather, I wanted to consume this girl like candy. This would not be the last time.

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My obsession had limited the horizons of my vision. Events outside my personal tragedy occurred in January. Frank was upset because the *Merry Marvel Marching Society* left the TV airwaves (January 9); Mom got mad at dad because he worked a double shift on their wedding anniversary (January 12), The Packers beat the Chiefs in Super bowl I (January 14), and Jack married Barbara in Berlin (January 20).

February was a month of decompressing from my seventy-five-day ordeal with Debbie. I returned my focus to school and track. I even flirted with girls on Valentine’s Day. On Sunday, February 26, Frank and I led a youth church service. I closed in prayer and served communion. Dad congratulated me. I confessed to my journal, “I seriously considered being a minister.”

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I concluded my journal at the one-year anniversary asking a series of questions.

What will be the future relationship between Debbie and me?

Who shall be the girl whose hand I next hold?

What about Jim and Jeannie? How long will they stay together?

What about Europe, will I go? And what effect will it have on me?

What about track? Will I jump six feet this year?

How about Eileen’s baby due in May, boy or girl?

I’m now six-foot one inch tall and one-hundred seventy pounds. Will that ever change?

What profession will I be? At the present I have no idea.

What about the Walkers, Zelens, and Zimmermans? What does the future hold for them?

What about the war that went unmentioned during my year of writing?

What will become of this war in Viet Nam?

What about 1984? Will the prophecy in Orwell’s book happen that way?

How long will this book keep intact? The beginning pages are already turning yellow.

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The months of March, April, and May passed quickly. Some journal questions were answered. Debbie did not respond to ten letters. There was no future relationship; Jim broke up with Jeannie in March; I did clear six feet in my last jump of the year; and Eileen gave birth to a baby girl named Jennifer on May 28. Just after her California arrival, Donovan was singing *Jennifer, Juniper*.

My final grades for the semester were: Advanced Algebra, B; Latin, A; German, B+; History, A; Physics, C+. Considering all my distraction and laziness, I was not displeased with the results. I couldn't believe that Pig actually made the honor roll: AAABB. He had finally applied himself.

My plan was to spend the summer in Germany as part of a student exchange program. I had already made a fifty-dollar deposit. But after consulting with my Air Force brother, we decided I could just as easily live with Jack and Barbara in Berlin. Dad bought me round-trip tickets for a summer in Germany for which I contributed about half of the cost.

Just as school let out, a new Beatles album debuted. *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* was their twelfth album. Jim and I played it constantly. It was the first pop album with all lyrics printed and a no-cut flow on each side of the vinyl. We grooved to it every day until I departed to Germany on June 17.

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In my fifty-day journal, I detail my jet ride from Chicago to London, then on to Berlin. It was my first time in the air and so novel. I kept my vomit bag as a souvenir. I was puzzled upon my arrival at Tempelhof Airport. I sat for an hour but no one appeared to greet me. Fortunately, mom insisted I carry the address and phone number of Jack's apartment. I called but without answer. I located a taxi and managed to find his place in the French Sector. It cost seven Deutsch marks.

Barbara was shocked when she opened the door. She pointed at me then shouted, "Jack, it's your brother."

I was happy to see them, but hurt. "Why didn't you meet me at the airport? Didn't you get the letter with my itinerary?"

"No, we didn't get a letter", Jack said. "And you're lucky. We were just about to leave."

After the shock of my arrival, conversation and beer flowed. I drank the brew, but never developed a taste for it. I grew tired after my long journey and fell asleep on a fold-out couch.

My days with Jack were variations on a theme. The pattern was Jack working at Tempelhof from about eight in the morning until three in the afternoon. I slept in, listened to American radio, wrote in my diary, and strolled the local streets. When Jack came home, we visited city sites. After a week, I learned to ride the U-bahn to Tempelhof where our tourist activities began. Barbara worked in a small shop until five and we often picked her up in Jack's 1962 Mustang.

We toured museums, monuments, towers, and festivals. At each location, I took a few pictures with a camera borrowed from Big Jim Walker. I preferred slides to prints and during my adventure I developed five boxes of transparencies.

West Berlin seemed to have one foot rooted in the past and one stepping into the future. I saw the ruins of Kaiser Wilhelm Church and bullet-pocked walls, testaments to World War Two. I toured the Berlin Wall, Checkpoint Charlie, and walked past Soviet soldiers, all features of the raging cold war. I was also surrounded by tall glass buildings, constant construction, and bright colors. Berlin was striding into an uncertain future.

A major event was the wedding of Barbara's sister, Heidi, to Lothar Wothe. I attended a bachelor's party, gift giving, and over-drinking. One evening, I asked Jack for his car keys in order to sleep in the cramped back seat. The summer sun awoke me at 5:00 a.m.

Jack helped me cash in the return-flight portion of my TWA ticket. My revised plan called for me to ramble by train, bus, and ferry to Scotland, catch a cheap flight to New York City, then bus to Hammond. I was seeking adventure.

On July 11, I assisted Jack as he mailed giant boxes to Whiting, packed his duffle bags, and caught a military hop to Frankfurt, where he met up with Barbara for their flight across the Atlantic. I moved my bags to spend a few weeks with Barbara's parents.

Kurt Gierke was a retired shop owner and looked after me most days. He escorted me on the U-bahn to various locations. We went to the city's huge stadium, site of the 1936 Olympics. He liked to bet on horses so we went to the race track a few times. He seemed to know everyone we met. Claire Gierke treated me like a son, always tucking in my shirt and fussing over my meals. Because of their limited English, my German speaking improved. I was sad to leave them and my adopted city of Berlin.

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I said *Auf Wiedersehen* to Berlin on the last day of July. I flew Pan Am over East Germany landing in Hanover. I taxied to the train station then traveled by rail to Frankfurt then Mainz. I wandered miles to find a hotel for thirteen DM. All of this was accompanied by delay, misdirection, and confusion. But I was on my own and loved the role of international vagabond.

On the next day, I ferried for six hours up the Rhine River to Cologne taking pictures of castles, countryside, and cathedrals. I was constantly hungry with little money. I remember glancing at a boisterous German foursome who were consuming platefuls of sausage and pastry. The waiter removed half-filled plates. How I longed for those crumbs.

My flophouse in Cologne cost me seven DM. I then traveled to Aachen and on to Oostende, Belgium. I counted and recounted my money. I figured I had just enough to reach Whiting, but I would have to be thrifty. I met an English chap named Chris Martin and for twenty-four hours he was my best friend. Our conversations refreshed my spirit. I gave him one of my Kennedy half dollars as a gift of appreciation.

Together we crossed the English Channel, looked upon the white cliffs, and passed through UK customs. We traveled to London and toured the city. My friend caught a train to Bristol in the late evening. I decided not to book a hotel but remain in the station all night. He advised me they cleared the depot at one, but said I could reside in Hyde Park until morning.

About midnight the Bobbies swept through the depot asking for tickets. I decided it was time to skedaddle. I walked to Hyde Park, then strolled until 1:30. My feet and back were killing me so I sat on a park bench, soon stretched out and sleeping, my bag as a pillow.

I felt a baton tap on my boots. A Bobbie asked me what I was doing. I told him and he asked for an ID. I produced my passport and he left me alone. I was a little stressed so I walked a few blocks to a Wimpy Hamburger joint. With a purchase of one burger and coke, I slouched there until the 4:30 closing time. I went out into the cold night and sat on a bench. The summer sun began to dawn and I felt safer. About 7:00 I found a hotel with a vacancy and booked a room for three pounds. The space would not be available until afternoon so I rested in the lobby, then explored the city again. I slept in a comfortable hotel room until dark, got up to snack, then slept again until morning.

I did not have enough money for a daily hotel, so I planned to stay every second night on the street. This day I accomplished a walking tour of Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, and the Houses of Parliament. I sat on a bench long enough to hear Big Ben chime out three hours. I sat in the train depot playing chess solitaire and thumbing through Readers Digest. I struck up a conversation with two locals and told them my problems. They said I could come with them and stay in the basement of their night club. The lights went out at four in the morning and I slept soundly on a sofa until noon.

I was in London for another two days, wandering streets with blistered feet. I tossed out my worn razor allowing my beard to sprout. My poverty freed me and constrained me at the same time. I visited the wax museum, Tower of London, and spent hours in various museums. On Carnaby Street, I purchased a souvenir recording of the latest Beatle release, *All You Need Is Love*.

I walked a few miles from my hotel to King's Crossing. The burden of my duffle bag strained my shoulders. My northbound train passed through Newcastle and into Edinburgh. I was in the Scottish capital from 6:30 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.

Daylight lingered so I was able to walk from Waverley Station to Edinburgh Castle. I rested in the manicured park until dark and then trudged back to the station to wait for my early morning train. About 11:00 p.m. I was approached by a friendly Scot who engaged me in conversation.

He invited me to visit his place for a meal and nap. I considered, then followed him through winding streets and into an upstairs apartment. After sardines and crackers (yuck) he invited me to rest on his cot. The lights went out and the next thing I knew the man was lying next to me with his hand on my crotch. I sprung up and shouted, "What are you doing?"

He responded, "Don't you trust me. Please just rest. It won't happen again. I promise"

Just as I was dozing off, I felt the hand again. I slapped it away, grabbed my stuff, and dashed from the room. As I huffed back to the train depot, I felt fortunate to have escaped with my body and gear intact.

My train ride to Glasgow was uneventful, although I did have trouble locating the international airport. People kept directing me to the local Glasgow facility. I was the last person to board the transatlantic flight from Aberdeen to New York City.

When I landed at JFK, I didn't understand the geography of the great American metropolis. I figured I could just switch to a Greyhound bus and be on my way. I was tired, hungry, and aggravated when a cop explained to me that I needed to catch an express carriage to the Manhattan bus yard. After a two-dollar ride I arrived at the gigantic depot trying to find my way to a Chicago-bound bus.

With stops in Pittsburg, Cleveland, Toledo, South Bend, and Gary, I finally arrived in Hammond at 1:00 the next day. This was far behind the time I had telephoned to dad.

I concluded my travel journal like this:

Once in Hammond, I asked where the regular bus stop was. She directed me to a location about two blocks away. I gave the bus driver my only money, a JFK half dollar. I got off at 118<sup>th</sup> street and Calumet. But I didn't feel like going home. I just didn't want my adventure to end! I walked slowly down three streets. I felt like a stranger. I looked down our alley and noticed it was newly oiled. I didn't want it all to end then, so I walked around to the front instead of entering at the back door. I stood bravely and knocked. My magic adventure had come to an end!

Only mom and dad were home. They both were really happy. Dad said he had gone to Hammond but I wasn't there. Pig had made a big sign, "Welcome home, Chris", now draped across the couch.

Mom said, "Gee, you look thin". I got on the scales: 158 pounds. Wow! Down twenty pounds. I only had thirty-five cents left in my pocket, too. Man, I just made it. That's about it. I got my big bag the following day and my German-sent box came too. So, I close. Never again will I write in a diary.

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When I arrived in Whiting, former Air Force sergeant Jack greeted me from the back apartment. He had just landed a management position. Barbara worked in a local medical clinic, adjusting to the American way of life.

Within a few days I was practicing football at Clark Field. Once I had reconciled myself to the kick-off and punt teams, my final football season wasn't half bad. I enjoyed the sideline banter with my second-string flunkies.

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In September, I began my terminal year at Clark School feeling I had scaled a twelve-story mountain. I met with my career counselor. She smiled, "If your goal is to teach school, Ball State University is a good choice." She frowned, "Too bad. You're just a few points short of making the national honor society."

I too was disappointed in my lack of academic achievement. I had finally discerned myself as more intellectual than athletic. I dropped a fourth-level math class, opting instead for French. I was now studying three foreign languages. Plus, in English literature, I read some Old English (Beowulf) and Middle English (Canterbury Tales). I embraced my new identity as a Renaissance man.

Jim acquired a new girlfriend while I was in Europe. Sharon played matchmaker for me, pointing out a few of her friends who—rumor had it—liked me. I gave one young lady a second look. Her name was Arlene Kurek.

## Chapter 6

# Enamored

beginning on October 4, 1967  
and continuing for 2 years, 5 months, and 25 days

*“Let her kiss me with the kisses of her mouth, for her kisses are sweeter than wine. (adapted from Song of Solomon 1:2)”*

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### October 1967

October fourth became one of “our days”. That was the Wednesday Arlene and I got together for the first time. I was studying alone at the local library, when matchmaker Sharon and schemer Jim brought Arlene to form a study foursome. The two girls chuckled as Jim and I called them “mackerel snappers”— a reference to their Catholic upbringing.

I was in the midst of memorizing the prologue to *Canterbury Tales* in Middle English. I impressed Arlene by rattling off eighteen lines of Chaucer, beginning with:

Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote,  
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,  
And bathed every veyne in swich licour  
Of which vertú engendred is the flour;

I enjoyed the attention of Arlene, but my focus remained on football and school work. In November, I decided to expand my horizon by joining the debate team. Mr. Ericsson was our sponsor and the national debate topic for the term 1967-8 was: “Resolved, congress should establish uniform regulation for criminal investigation”. Four of us debaters stayed overnight at Purdue University for the Indiana High School Debaters Conference. We advanced a few rounds, but our lack of experience betrayed us. I wished I had invested my high school years in lively debate rather than in bouncing balls.

I was elected president of the Clark German Club. As Christmas neared, I organized a neighborhood caroling party. We identified local German natives, knocked on their doors, and sang *Stille Nacht* and *Oh, Tannenbaum*. Barbara was a recipient of our merrymaking.

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In December, when Sharon asked Jim to attend the winter dance, Jim encouraged me to call Arlene so we could double date. (I learned that’s what girls liked to do.) And so, I overcame my phone-phobia and called Arlene. As expected, she invited me to the formal dance. I partied through the 1967 sub-deb with a tinge of sadness. I looked backward to the 1966 event when I gazed into the doe eyes of Debbie.

Arlene lived on Lakeside Avenue across from Saint Adalbert, her parish church. I met with her family for the Christmas Eve mass on my eighteenth birthday. She instructed me when to stand, kneel, sit, and genuflect. I beheld an unexpected beauty in the Latin liturgy and continued to accompany Arlene to Saint Al’s on special occasions.

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A few days after Christmas, I drove to the Selective Service Center in Hammond, birth certificate in hand. I filled out required papers and received my draft card. The official told me to carry it at all times on my person.

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As a newly-minted eighteen-year-old, my father finagled me a position at Youngstown Steel in East Chicago. Jimmy Francis labored alongside of me, both of us putting in sixteen hours over most weekends. I wore a hardhat, carried a lunch bucket, and earned a blue-collar wage of \$2.40 an hour. Dad took me aside to warn me of the foul language used around the mill. I assured him I was familiar with most of the terms.

It later struck me how incredibly easy it was for an inexperienced teenager to hire on to a part-time and well-paid position. Within a few short years, all the regional mills would be shuttered and all the laboring men sent home.

I spent the stroke of midnight 1967/1968 at Youngstown Steel earning time and a half— an incredible \$3.60 an hour.

### 1968

On January 12, Charlotte gave birth to a baby boy named Dan Mitchell Walker, my fourth nephew. As he came into the world, the Beatles topped the charts with *Hello-Goodbye*. I bought that 45 record for Arlene, listening to it together as we snuggled on her parlor loveseat.

Our romance heated up quickly, exploding into flame. Soon we were inseparable, a bonded pair of lovebirds. I passed daily notes to her written with the salutation, “2R”. My hallmark was to slip her a piece of Wrigley’s chewing gum with a secret poem inscribed on the inside wrapper. “Come live with me and be my love and I will show what I’m thinking of. You are the one whom I desire. Come live with me and light my fire”.

On February seventh—one of our days to remember— we went on a date to the Hammond Paramount Theater. We sat through *Bonny and Clyde*, hugging and kissing. Seated in my Falcon after the show, I proposed to Arlene that we officially go steady. Her face beamed as we exchanged high school rings. Hers fit snugly onto my pinky finger while mine would be threaded with angora yarn.

At school the next day, Arlene assumed the persona of Bonny and I posed as Clyde. “We rob banks!” I drawled to her, the gap between my front teeth providing a handy notch for Clyde’s ever-present match stick. Both of us were silly with love.

Rock & roll hits of early 1968 provided a soundscape to our lovefest: *To Sir with Love*, *Judy in Disguise*, *Green Tambourine*, *Dock of the Bay*, and *This Guy’s in Love with You*. Each was a special song to us.

Arlene turned eighteen on April first. The link to “April fools” provided endless fodder for my punny jokes. I treated Arlene to a fancy dinner and we goo-goo-eyed into the evening. Suddenly her shining eyes filled with tears as she shared with me the tragic death of her baby niece. She said insanity was a contributing factor. She wept, wondering if I could still love her with such a troubled history. All this came as news to me, but I assured her my love was unstoppable.

Mom was still awake when I stepped through the door after midnight. She noticed my sullen expression and asked if anything were wrong.

“Yes”, I said.

Her face darkened as she asked, “What’s the matter, son?”

I spelled out the story and she responded, “Yes, I know about that. It was in all the local papers.”

“Then why did you look so worried when you first asked me about the evening?”

“Oh, I thought maybe Arlene might be pregnant or something.” She blushed.

My eyes widened and I paused. “Mom, look out that window. The last time a pregnancy like that happened, a star was shining in the east.”



Viewed through the rose prism of Eros, my entire world-scape brightened. I relished my classwork, reciting Shakespeare sonnets, and discussing presidential politics. My government teacher was shocked when LBJ declined to run for re-election. Suddenly both Republican and Democratic primaries were wide open.

Mr. Roman asked me to read aloud my political limericks.

President Johnson has quit.  
Eugene McCarthy lacks hit.  
Bobby’s a hippie.  
Hubert’s a drippy.  
The whole stinkin’ party’s unfit.

Now Ethel is pregnant again.  
We thought she might stop once at ten.  
But that’s not our Bobby.  
It must be his hobby.  
Endowing the world with childREN.



Senior track marked the summit of my athletic accomplishment. I was captain of the team and consistently high-jumped over six feet. Coach Powell initiated the first ever Clark Relays in 1968, inviting six schools to compete at Clark Field. Mom, dad, Frank, Jack, Barbara, plus Charlotte with her kids all showed up to cheer. Arlene was present, sitting in the front row in the admiration of her friends. I basked in the moment.

The school year seemed to pass at warp speed. *Tempus fugit* I noted in my Latin notebook. With track, work, and steady girlfriend, I remained deliriously exhausted. I bought a camera snapping dozens of pictures of my female fascination.

At the track sectional meet, I scored second in the high jump. At the regional meet, I finally broke the Clark School record with a leap of six-feet-two and one-half inches. I advanced to the state competition in Indianapolis on May 25—the first Pioneer in ten years to reach the state capitol. Arlene attended the championship meet with her parents. I bombed, barely clearing six feet. My track career had ended on a sour note, but my romance with R continued to sweeten.

The Pioneer News, our purple mimeographed newsletter, ran a senior edition. What did the editors see in the futures of selected twelfth graders? My entry simply read: “Chris Foreman – Arlene”.

The two of us attended the senior prom in May. The theme of the dance was “Love is Blue” named after a popular song of the day. She was gorgeous and I was infatuated. Afterwards, I parked the Falcon in the dark recesses of Whiting beach. We crossed personal boundaries, sliding into territory we had both vowed to keep off limits. The initiative was mine, but she yielded with eagerness to my embrace. We did not arrive at the terminal, but I did learn that sex is a locomotive that does not possess a reverse engine.

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The political times were crazy, punctuated by anti-war demonstrations, fraught with cultural tumult, and populated by long-haired hippies and radical Yippies. Riots erupted across America when Martin Luther King was murdered on April 4 and Chicago shut down after police attacked protesters at the Democratic National Convention. Two days before graduation, Bobby Kennedy was gunned down in Los Angeles. My friend, Kevin, was despondent.

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The final day of school was designated “senior day”. The class of 1968 gathered in the gym for hugs, tears, and farewells. I had spent twelve of my eighteen years—66% of my life—in the halls of Clark school. Our high school yearbook was distributed to all who paid the fifteen dollars. Thirty classmates signed their names and scribbled messages into my Powder Horn. One inscribed equation succinctly summed up my emotions that day:

2 young  
2 be  
4 gotton

High school graduation took place on June 6 with speeches in the auditorium and a class photo on the front steps. I talked with dozens of friends whom I figured I would never forget, but soon vanished into the void. Eric and Reinhard sat front and center as valedictorian and salutatorian. I managed a class standing of 56 of 224.

I had never before considered the distinction between the words “graduation” and “commencement”. At this auspicious moment, the first lay behind and the second ahead. The picture-pose was a seam in the fabric of life.

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School was out for Chris and Arlene. The innocence lay behind us and we looked with hope to the future. I had been admitted to Ball State earlier in the year and in June, dad and mom drove me to orientation. The university seemed enormous. I gawked at the twelve-story Teachers College. Everywhere I looked I saw construction cranes. My cohort of matriculating freshmen would be the high-water mark of the baby boom flood.

Arlene’s plans proved more modest than mine. She signed up for college classes at Saint Joseph extension and found a part-time job at the power company. Of course, we hung out every moment possible.

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Jim and I worked full-time at Youngstown. The United Steel Workers Union required every millwright be assigned an assistant. My job most of the time was to shadow my mechanic and shine a flashlight wherever he directed. Jim and I made fun of our labor bosses. We labeled the rotund one “Egg man” and the mustachioed one “Walrus”.

As a daily routine, I'd get up at seven, pick up Jim, and be at the mill before eight. I remember the hot summer days. Barely washed, I would find R waiting for me on her front stoop about five. What joy would be on her face! We would paint the town past midnight. I'd drop her off, sleep a few hours, then begin the cycle again. Fatigue held no consequence.



About this time, the Zelen family packed up and moved from Alabama. Don had climbed up the corporate ladder to a position in Longview, Washington. My brother-in-law now managed a new Reynolds cable plant. After a month in Washington State, Jeanne invited the family to visit the West Coast. Don hinted a job might be in the offing for dad.

It was a tearful parting for Arlene. "If you still love me when you come back, then I know we'll be all right." I stuck a letter into the mailbox for every day of our separation, each beginning with the greeting "2R".

This was a memorable vacation for both Frank and me. I added eleven new states, upping my state total to thirty-six. We crossed the Mississippi River, traversed endless cornfields, marveled at snowcap mountains, and puzzled at a sign that read: "Welcome to the Evergreen State." The hills were parched to parody.

We chugged through the Cascade Mountains, passing the iconic conic Mount Saint Helens. Dad was wonderstruck. He had to pull over the station wagon at the sight of water gushing from a hillside. He dumped his coffee to fill his thermos. When we arrived in Longview, I had the sense my parents would soon be moving west.

Our two-thousand-mile trek passed not without incident. As I was driving through Nebraska on a narrow side road, I saw ahead of me a pickup truck, towing a large boat, supporting a significant power motor. This long assemblage was backing out of a driveway. I tried to slow, swerved to the right, but the propeller blade shattered the left rear window. My father exchanged insurance information with the apologetic sportsman. For the remainder of the road trip, taped cardboard kept out the highway breeze.

We rushed through this visit. Dad had two weeks' vacation and I had to maintain my work status at Youngstown. We hosted at the Zelen home on 23rd Avenue, enjoying our extended family, cavorting with Debbie, Susie, Nancy, DJ, and Jingles the dog. Don held a well-paid position and generously co-signed for a brand-new vehicle. Mom gushed over our shiny candy-apple red station wagon.

Eileen and Terry drove up from Travis Air Force Base, California, with toddling Jenny and infant Laura. My sixth niece was born on June 24 when Simon and Garfunkel were crooning *Mrs. Robinson*, Jesus loves you more than you can know.

Foremans and Zimmermans headed south on Interstate 5, Terry piloting his newly acquired/slightly damaged family vehicle. We toured the Golden Gate Bridge, then stopped by Travis AFB and the Nut Tree. Next, we launched our long trip home, first passing south through Disneyland and the Grand Canyon, then northeast along Route 66 to Whiting. It was a rapturous homecoming. Arlene and I sang with the Beatles, "Hey, Jude, take a sad song and make it better."



I opened my first checking account at the First Bank of Whiting and wrote check number one for \$800. This amount, mailed to BSU, covered all expenses for my first quarter of college. Dad appreciated my economic independence.

As I prepared for upcoming college life, dad asked Frank and me to join him on the sofa. Mom sat by tearfully as dad explained that Don Zelen had offered him a job at the Reynolds cable plant. He and mom would be heading west and he wanted to know if we would join them. Dad left the decision to us.

My response was immediate. I intended to enroll at Ball State and stay close to R. Frank was hesitant, but decided to remain in Indiana. He wanted to finish out twelfth grade and compete in gymnastics. It was sad to see my family splitting apart.

On the last day of August, dad and I drove to Muncie in the station wagon laden with my belongings. He helped me carry bags and small bits of furniture up to the seventh floor of Shales Hall. I remember a final cup of coffee and a firm handshake. I had mixed feelings; sad to see my old man depart, but exuberant to be on my own at last.



I tumbled into the tumult of college life: new dorm, new roommate, new schedule, new classes, new classmates—everything had changed in a single day; except for R, my fixed star.

I was able to bum a ride home every second weekend. My motivation was primarily to visit R, but I also needed to maintain my employment status. To keep my job, I had to work at least eight hours every pay period (two weeks). I acquired my first credit card through AT&T and phoned Arlene's house nearly every day. The conversations ended up costing me around forty dollars per month.

In October, my folks rented a moving van packing it to the hilt. I came home for the weekend to see them off. The photograph shows mom somber, dad determined, and our new station wagon in tow. A U-Haul slogan read "Adventure in Moving". Dad bequeathed Jack custody of our corner lot, me use of the Ford Falcon, and Frank sole possession of the second bedroom where he surrounded himself with Marvel comics and gymnastic trophies.

College work soon filled my hours. My first batch of classes included English Composition, World Economic Geography, German Literature, and Swimming. I dropped by the Christian Student Foundation every Tuesday evening, more out of guilt than conviction. I remained late one November evening monitoring election results. How strange the words "President Nixon" sounded in my ears.

Ball State was on the quarter system—Fall, Winter, and Spring. The winter months found me taking more literature, history, and German. I wrote a paper on the European Common Market and failed to appreciate a class titled "Music Appreciation". My college relationships were wide but shallow, having lots of acquaintances, but few friends.



Jim Francis and I remained close, even in the military draft. On December 1, 1968, we sat together in his living room watching a TV special. Officials from the Selective Service drew lottery numbers to determine who would be army-inducted in 1969. The plastic capsule containing my birthdate matched number 95; Jim was one number away at 96. Both of us were draft bait, but I possessed a college deferment. My best buddy would soon relocate to Canada.



Jack and Barbara occupied our old homestead with gusto. A new regime established new norms. Cigarette smoke filled the air, beer the fridge, and liquor the cabinets. Barbara hosted a formal New Year's party for a dozen couples. Arlene and I enjoyed the festivities, imbibing a bit. Big Jim Walker drank more than his limit, but Barbara could not coax Charlotte to partake in a single drop of expensive whiskey.

## 1969

I was driving between Muncie and Whiting every second weekend. My one-way commute of two hundred miles took about three hours. I would leave campus at noon on Friday, work at the mill on Saturday and Sunday, then rush back to Muncie before my Monday morning class. I sometimes experienced road-side hallucinations as I raced through the darkness. Living in a residence hall, I parked the Falcon free in the Stadium lot.

Back home, I spent evening hours at Arlene's house sitting and talking. Her mother and father seemed positively disposed toward me, keeping a loose rein though close eye on their only daughter. Two older brothers lived in the house as did her nephew, Martin. The little boy's favorite sport was to sneak up on us lovers and giggle as we kissed.

Whiting Park provided our favorite seclusion. We would walk down the lonely shoreline gathering colorful bits of water-washed glass. We would pass blissful hours bouncing the Falcon and fogging the windows. This nighttime activity was termed "watching the submarine races".

Sometimes I would arrive at her home in the dead of night. I would climb over her back fence to toss pebbles at her upper bedroom window. R would whisper a greeting, dress, and meet me outside her back door.

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My father remained active in the Masonic Lodge. Somehow, a small Robertsdale house was left to the Masons in his name. Dad thought Terry and Eileen might want to move into it, so he asked Jack and me to visit the dilapidation. Jack appropriated a Masonic sword emblazoned with *in hoc signo vinces* and I acquired a Reader's Digest collection of classical recordings. I played those scratchy LPs for years. While Led Zeppelin and Janis Joplin rocked my play time, Mozart and Beethoven enhanced my hours of study. I recognized many of the classical pieces, discovering that Puccini authored the Lone Ranger theme and Liszt wrote a piano piece for Bugs Bunny.

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My grades improved in the Spring. I got A's in Biology, Earth Science, and British Literature. With a low grade in German, I decided to drop that field as my minor. My two P.E. classes were track and gymnastics. Both were easy A's.

My freshman year in Muncie overflowed with dorm mates, classmates, dropouts, and professors. A hundred human faces flashed into and out of my life. I could once address each person by name. Now all have vanished into the vapor.

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In Whiting, Frank excelled in gymnastics, especially floor exercise and trampoline. I traveled to his state meet and snapped photos of my brother receiving a first place and tenth place trophy. About a week later I attended his Clark High graduation. Mom and dad had returned to Whiting for the occasion. They put the house on the market, enlisted Frank and me for another trek west, and packed up the remainder of their belongings.

Our time as same-state brothers had come to an end. Frank and I gathered about one hundred 45 RPM records which we had purchased over the previous five years. The 45s belonged to us in common, because we split the cost or had forgotten who actually paid the dollar. We sorted through lots of Beatles, Rolling Stones, and Supremes vinyl. Frank picked the first record, I picked the next two, then we alternated picks. The moment was solemn, like a divorce. I knew we'd be walking down separate paths.

Arlene and I kissed goodbye for the second summer in a row. I planned to work at the Reynolds Aluminum plant for eighty days, long enough to cover my sophomore year expenses. Our parting was tearful, but not traumatic. Both of us were confident our romance was unbreakable.

Dad bought a second-hand pick-up truck and overpacked it with furniture. As a final flourish, he lashed a rocking chair to the top of the heap. Jack called us the Beverly Hillbillies. After stuffing the red station wagon to the gills, four of us headed West. Dad and mom managed the automobile, while Frank and I handled the pickup.

Somewhere in the endless plains, Frank was cruising down a monotonous highway. I chanced to glance left to see my brother with eyes half closed and grip rotating left. I seized the steering wheel, startling him awake. I have often wondered how life would have transformed if not for that chance glance.

We arrived in Longview at the start of July. Dad and mom occupied a customized four-bedroom home just a few blocks east of Lake Sacajawea. The previous owner of 1618 23rd Avenue had been a local physician and my folks were thrilled to own such a palace. With a big house, good job, and Zelens just next door, life shined for John and Jenny Foreman. Their only regret lay in the thought that such fortune hadn't shined upon them years earlier, before their nest emptied. Frank and I slept in a paneled upstairs bedroom. I remember an endless playing of Iron Butterfly: *In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida*.

A year earlier, when Terry had honorably separated from the Air Force, he and Eileen moved to Longview. Terry worked at the Reynolds cable plant with dad. I enjoyed visits with my little nieces Jenny and Laura.

My summer job was at the aluminum foundry. As an entry-level worker, I labored, swept, and hauled refuse. At the three-week mark, my boss instructed me to lift armfuls of scrap metal from one location and stack the debris by a fence. After three days of this menial toil, I was summoned into his office. He dismissed me, saying I didn't "put my heart into my work".

I was disappointed because I only earned \$500 rather than the \$1200 planned. However, I would be reunited with R sixty days earlier. Frank remained in Longview. He had earned a gymnastics scholarship to the University of Washington and would matriculate in the Fall. I flew into Chicago O'Hare, bussed to Hammond, and ran into Arlene's outstretched arms.



I had burned my employment bridge at Youngstown Steel, but was fortunate to find another union job at Inland Steel. I soon worked full time at the filthiest jobs one could imagine. For several weeks I climbed into the smoky mouth of an open-hearth blast furnace axe-picking at solidified slag waste. Even with asbestos protection, my feet swelled with heat.

Later I worked on the coke line. The furnace fires were fed through conveyer belts laden with powdered coal dust. The black powder would blow off the belts and my job was to shovel it back on. I remember one guy who partnered with me. At the half-hour break, he would rip off his breathing mask, run to the outside door, and

inhale a cigarette. Before leaving for home, my partner and I took turns blasting our clothing with high power air hoses.

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By this time, Jack had vacated the old homestead and I began to sleep in Walkers' basement. 1725 Sheridan became my official college home of record. But in fact, I spent more hours at R's house. I remember watching her TV on July 20 as Neil Armstrong stepped foot on the moon. We took steps into the humid night hand-in-hand to gaze into the dark sky. Could it be possible? Then, on August 15, we watched reports about that hippy rock concert in New York State called *Woodstock*. It seemed we had entered a brave new world in regard to both science and culture.

My Ford Falcon finally collapsed at Whiting Park and the junk man towed it away. I was under twenty-one so Mr. Francis, acting as a surrogate father, helped me buy a 1961 blue Chevy Biscayne. His own son had already found refuge in Toronto.

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The end of August saw the beginning of my second college year. I had earned enough money in three months to pay cash for the following nine months of university.

Mark Orewiler had been a casual friend at Shales Hall and had procured an off-campus residence for the Fall term. We arranged to be roommates at 312 McKinley Street. Our tiny space was up a flight of stairs, one of three bedrooms with a communal bathroom. Mark and I became fast friends. Our old landlady lived downstairs looking after her still older brother.

About a week after I settled in, Mark burst into our room with breathless news. He had spotted the old man in the garage dangling from the end of a rope. I rushed out to see. I touched the leg of the body and he jiggled as if alive. Further observation persuaded me the octogenarian was deceased. I walked to a nearby college office and called the police who carted the corpse away.

Because of my excellent grades during my freshman year I received an academic scholarship and admittance into the honors program. The centerpiece of the Honors curriculum was a course called "Humanities", meeting five days a week for the entire school year. I felt I had joined the intelligentsia. Without German as a drag-me-down, I earned straight A's during the fall and winter quarters. I figured I had my life under control: a good place to live, outstanding grades, and a faithful girlfriend. The Beatles released *Abby Road* and I was singing "Something in the way she moves attracts me like no other lover."

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Things got even better with R. Her parents were kind enough to escort her to Ball State to attend the Football homecoming. I can't recall the main event, but I do remember the joy. I was so proud to strut around campus holding her hand. Mark joined us on the grassy quad to throw a frisbee. We three tossed and chased the plastic disc. Mark was better at the backhand toss; I was accurate with a sidearm finger flip. Arlene was having a ball. I hinted to Mark that the two of us might be married soon, perhaps by the following summer.

In October, I visited the college jewelry shop and purchased on credit one diamond engagement ring with matching wedding bands. I didn't consult with R and she was shocked when I showed the rings to her. I decided my Thanksgiving break would be the opportune time to ask Mr. Kurek for his daughter's hand in marriage. R was apprehensive.

Before the lavish meal, I spoke alone to Mr. and Mrs. Kurek. I boldly asked for the hand of Arlene in marriage. They were interested, bewildered, and subdued all at the same time. The dinner was great with her two brothers and nephew seated around the table. One brother congratulated me on my straight A report card.

I never heard a peep of response from her parents; only silence. And the silence grew to estrangement, then to hostility. I was never quite sure what the issue was. R would say, “Oh, my parents are mad at you”. My hunch centered on the elephant in the room: our religious divide. It seemed the Kureks were accepting of Arlene having a non-Catholic boyfriend, but not of themselves having a Protestant son-in-law. I sensed a drift in Arlene as well.

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It was a strange time. We became physically closer even as we grew more emotionally distant. Every weekend an intense quarrel seemed to trigger a more intimate embrace. The more I felt her slipping away, the tighter I hung on. I knew she was floundering.

Over Christmas break, Mark traveled with his girlfriend from Muncie to Whiting. The four of us drove into Chicago for a concert of the Moody Blues. The night was intended to be carefree, but R and I battled continually. I felt embarrassed to have my best friend witness me shouting and Arlene foot stomping.

In contrast, we celebrated New Year’s Eve, two hearts beating as one. In the backseat of my Chevy we heated the mid-winter chill to a sizzle. I had liberated a flask of liquor from Jim Walker’s cabinet. As the whistles and booms welcomed in the new decade, we sipped a toast to each other. Where there is life, there is hope.

### **1970 to April**

I treasured my moments with the Walker family. I have pictures of Chrissy and Danny standing on a highchair and draped with a sash reading 1-9-7-0. Charlotte was so kind, putting up with my late hours, sullen attitude, and consumption of food. Big Jim mostly ignored me, and the four children clung to me at times. It was obvious Jim and Charlotte were mismatched and miserable.

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I was still laboring at Inland Steel. The mill rats knew me as a college whiz-kid. I remember asking a wizened worker about pressurized tanks. Some were labeled “OX” for oxygen and some “PP” for propane. After contemplating a while, I asked him what “MT” signified. He laughed, called his buddies together, and asked me to pronounce the letters slowly.

A goofy co-worker was called “bubblegum” by the bosses. A few months before I was hired, this guy was pounding nails into a wall and dislodged a gooey substance. He sniffed it between his fingers and declared it to be bubblegum. More was discovered. He insisted it was chewed bubblegum. Still more, nearly the entire wall was uncovered. He never backed down admitting he was wrong. Bubblegum deserved his moniker.

The mill was an educating experience. A piece of graffiti scrawled on the side of a foundry crucible read: “America=The melting pot. Scum rises to the top and those on the bottom get burned.”

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Ball State had a one-week break between the Winter and Spring term. Arlene cut a day of work and sneaked down to campus. It was an afternoon of erotic delight. The pattern was familiar: anticipation (of what was about to happen)—recreation (giggling and foreplay)—consummation (moments of fleeting rapture)—

realization (once again breaking our self-promise)—and, resolution (not to let it happen again). We were constantly filled with guilt. Anguish followed ecstasy. I rationalized that since I was going to marry Arlene anyway, then what’s wrong with a little premarital sex? That veneer peeled away as I increasingly suspected marriage may not be in the cards. Yet my lust flamed more than ever. Arlene became an object of my passion, a means to satisfy an animal appetite.

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I astounded my friend Mark by pledging a Greek fraternity. I had a hole in my heart and thought I might fill it with male camaraderie. During rush week, I pledged Theta Chi. It was so odd. There was a month of kindness, they courting me. Then came a week of abuse and physical testing. A guy named Spoolie had just left the army and treated us to military-grade hazing. I did push-ups until my arms ached. I tried my best to cop a gun-ho attitude, but like in high-school sports, my personality was too stoic. Plus, I had no palate for the keggers. I was accepted into the fraternity—I learned later—not because of my winning personality but with a high GPA I bumped up the frat house average.

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In the Spring quarter I sparred with God. I had no doubt He existed, but I no longer liked Him. After all, the Supreme Being was pulling Arlene away from me. In Philosophy 101, I excelled when the topic shifted to the question of God’s existence. No student rivaled me with knowledge of Scripture, not even the professor. I was able to demonstrate, without doubt, that God was just a fairy tale, a projected father figure. I received an A+ on a paper contending that the Creator might just as well be a committee of gremlins as the God of Genesis.

In my Humanities class, we studied the Bible as literature, along with the *City of God*. Again, with practiced Bible skills, I proved that Saints Paul and Augustine were closet Platonists more than Christian monotheists. At the time, I mistook my hubris to be intellectualism.

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Arlene and I were still writing each other a few times a week. She shared her opinion that I was too long-haired and too radical by speaking out against the war in Viet Nam. She scolded me for suggesting I might seek asylum in Canada if drafted. In one letter she said, “Be careful. I think my mom is opening my mail and reading what you say to me.”

I was filled with righteous indignation. I addressed the next letter to R and wrote in bold print an opening line, “Dear Mrs. Kurek. These words are private, directed to Arlene, not you. Please mind your own business!”

During our next phone conversation, I asked R if her mom had opened the letter clearly marked “personal”. She said, “Oh yes, she screamed at you for ten minutes.”

Our romance was collapsing. Her parents forbade me to stop by her home, so I picked R up at her workplace. One day she stepped into my car reluctantly and suggested it might be wise to give our relationship a few months’ rest. Maybe we could date other people. I was aghast, clinging and pleading. As we left the parking lot, R glanced behind and said, “Uh oh, my dad’s following us.” I drove around for ten minutes. Finally, R directed me to pull into a lot.

I stepped from the car and held my ground. My passive face did not react as her mother sputtered insults. Her dad cursed so hard his dentures flung loose. Finally, he yanked Arlene from my car and pushed her into their backseat. My girlfriend was sobbing. My world was crumbling.

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I plunged into despair, diagnosing my problem as “Boy meets girl/Boy loses girl/Boy loses himself”. I sought a pharmaceutical solution. For a few months already I had been smoking an occasional joint with Mark and his friends. I inhaled marijuana as a means to escape reality. It seemed like a generational thing to do. I enjoyed the TCP high, but not the smoke filling my lungs. It also seemed like maximal effort to achieve minimal buzz. Hashish was better, but still inadequate. Plus, dope smoking proved to be a group activity and I was a loner.

One of my newly-acquired fraternity brothers was a known drug dealer. I scored a hit of LSD for just eight dollars. Over the next fourteen months, blotter acid was my trip of choice—without smoke, without companionship, yet pseudo-spiritual. I tripped across inner space without traveling a step. Cannabis Sativa was a recreational drug, but Lysergic Acid Diethylamide was a recreational vehicle.



I determined to take a dramatic stand to win back the heart of Arlene. I skipped classes on April first—her twentieth birthday—paid twenty dollars for twenty long-stem roses, then zoomed two hundred miles northwest to her work place. Over three highway hours, I begged God to work a miracle and return Arlene to me. I figured if God cared about me at all, He could certainly manage such a trivial request.

# Chapter 7

## Estranged

*beginning on April 1, 1970  
and continuing for 1 year, 4 months, and 10 days*

*“He gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. (The prodigal son from Luke 15:13)”*

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From my earliest years I have been a hopeless romantic. My heart has continually yearned for love and has wept at love's demise. My soul has always resonated to sentimental songs of unrequited love: *Blueberry Hill* by Fats Domino (1956), *Mr. Blue* by the Fleetwoods (1959), *Blue Velvet* by Bobby Vinton (1963), and *Suite: Judy Blue Eyes* by Crosby, Stills & Nash (1969). Each song lyric is a variation of my own heart-crushing Arlene blues.

This heart ailment from which I suffered might be termed EGRD: “Eros-God Reversal Disorder” suggested by First John 4:8. The transitive sentence reads: “God is love”. Logic may infer an equivalence of nouns on either side of the verb, but that is a deception. The meaning distorts when reversed into “Love is God”. I know this through experience. I made love my god, turning Eros into deity. I enthroned an idol where only God should reign. The result of EGRD was heartbreak on earth and estrangement from heaven.

### April 1970

April 1, 1970, marked Arlene's twentieth birthday. I had purchased twenty roses for the occasion. At about four o'clock I pulled into her workplace lot. I paced the sidewalk with nervous tension, rehearsing magic words I prayed would regain her affection. I imagined her familiar smile and conjured an embrace still fresh to memory. Rain began to pelt my ballcap, so I sat in the Chevy. Red roses rested on a cushion so recently laden by Arlene's frame.

Drizzle muddied the dusty windshield so I didn't see her face. Rather, I heard that achingly familiar laugh, then words like, “Help me out. I can't open this umbrella.” I heard a chuckling male response.

I flung open the door and confronted R. Her escort froze in bewilderment. I inhaled a breath of courage, removed the bouquet from the car, and handed the bundle to the stranger. I sputtered, “Today is Miss Kurek's birthday. Do me a favor and pass these flowers on to her”. I gave the astonished Arlene a warped smile, then returned to my car. I saw the two gesturing as I sped away.

I parked on a side street, turned off the ignition, and howled with pain. An arrow had pierced my heart. I pounded the dashboard in anguish. The woman I had worshipped had betrayed me.

After regaining a measure of composure, I drove to Whiting. Charlotte recognized my pain and let me be. I stretched out for a few hours then drove in the darkness back to Muncie. Fantasy was dissolving. Reality was sinking in.

A few days later I received a polite note from R. She thanked me for the birthday flowers, adding I had misinterpreted events. Her kind co-worker had offered to escort her to the lot on a rainy afternoon. He supported her elbow because the stairs were slippery. Arlene said I had embarrassed her and was no longer welcome to visit her at work. I crumpled the letter in agony as I scanned her multiple photos plastered around my study desk.

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In my final letter to R, I related a story about my four-year-old nephew Chrissy. He had attended a pre-school party and had brought home two goldfish in a plastic bag. Charlotte placed the little critters into a glass bowl at his bedside.

Chrissy really loved those fishies, but on the second morning he stumbled down the stairway in tears. The goldfish were dead. Chris had loved his friends so much he plucked them from the water and set them near his heart. And thus, it had happened to his namesake uncle as well.

On my next visit to Whiting, Arlene asked to meet me outside her home. I noticed her mother peeking through a front curtain. Through a rolled-down car window, I handed over her 1968 class ring and she returned mine. It was over. By coincidence, on the same day R and I separated, John, Paul, George, and Ringo signed papers dissolving the Beatles.

I returned the wedding bands to the jewelry store in late April. I had paid about half of what I owed for the \$350 set. I hinted perhaps the jeweler might return some of my cash. He smiled, "Sir, we can guarantee the jewelry, but not the relationships."

I muttered to myself, "Would that you could".

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I found myself in free fall during the months of April and May. Life held no meaning. My language coarsened. My company worsened. Drug parties and radical politics entered my life. Boone's Farm wine and Winston cigarettes became staples. My comrades termed themselves "freaks" and the word seemed apropos. In our clothing, vocabulary, and attitude, we strove to distinguish ourselves from the "straights" of the world.

In the midst of depression and turmoil, my Spring grades held remarkably steady: An A, three B's and a C. Mark was impressed. I told him "that's why they call it a BS degree."

Since I had abandoned German as a minor, I had to find an alternative. I dropped by the assessment center and took a battery of aptitude tests. My interests scored all over the map, from science, to philosophy, to history. With such an array of aptitudes, the counselor suggested Library Science where I could be a jack of all trades and a master of none.

On May 4, anti-war sentiment boiled over at nearby Kent State University. Four students lay dead at the hands of the Ohio National Guard. A group of us rallied on the Ball State mall and I signed a petition supporting "The Peoples Peace Treaty." I looked on as several college men burned their draft cards in protest.

The guy who lived across the hall invited me to a local Unitarian Universalist Church. I obliged, thinking it would expand my horizons. I was shocked to see Buddhas, saints, Krishnas, and minarets intermingled throughout a gilded meeting hall. I realized I remained Christian at core. If someone were to ask me, "Who is God?", my response might be, "The Holy One against whom I am rebelling".

About this same time Jesus was making a cultural comeback on campus. I began to notice students sporting t-shirts that read "Jesus People". The vinyl album *Jesus Christ Superstar* topped the pop charts. What was this buzz about Christ? I dismissed it as camp; something that provided amusement to the sophisticated. Jesus was so un-cool; He was becoming re-cool.

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Don Zelen's mother—Grandma Rose—invited me to live in her basement for the summer of 1970. I was able to work forty hours per week at Inland Steel, spending off hours with the Walkers. One summer evening Arlene dropped by the house. I think she felt sorry for me. I invited her into the kitchen for a grape Nihi soda. My ex-girlfriend showed me the new car her parents had purchased for her. I quipped, "So that's how they bought you off, huh?" Arlene was not amused. She drove into the sunset not to reappear for many years.

My former high-school teacher, Mr. Erickson, lived alone in a Whiting apartment. He invited a gaggle of young men to his place for discussion and counseling. I knew of his foppish reputation, but he was cultured and kind. After watching the movie, *Patton*, I was thrilled to discuss events of World War Two. To my amazement, Mr. Erickson was a journalist in 1945 and actually interviewed the famous general. It struck me for the first time that an old man's biography is a young man's history. Over the next year, I dropped by his place whenever in Whiting.

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In July, I skipped work to help Jack relocate. We hitched a U-Haul trailer to the back of his convertible and drove two thousand miles west to Longview, Washington. Jack soon found a job selling real estate while Barbara looked after her kitty named Puppy.

Jack and I went to the Kelso Theater to see *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Afterwards we talked for hours about the future of space travel and what life might be like in the twenty-first century. Would we have computers like HAL? Maybe I would live on the moon.

Dad and mom had some kind of religious experience that didn't interest me. However, I was fascinated by their collection of Bible recordings. An actor named Alexander Scourby had recorded the entire New Testament on long-play phonograph albums. As I overheard the King James Version, my spirit inside wept.

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I remained with my parents for a week before flying to Chicago. My Chevy began to burn oil and black clouds trailed me to the junk yard. I replaced it with a classic 1961 Impala for \$250. Unfortunately, three days later, this big-finned beauty was side-swiped while parked on Calumet Avenue. I had no insurance, so my two-tone car remained crumpled for a month of driving.

Big industry was shutting down in northwest Indiana. After my final steel-mill paycheck, I bought a 1965 Catalina for \$450. With bankbook nearly depleted, I packed my belongings and motored to Muncie for my third year of college.

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I hooked up with a nineteen-year-old friend named Lynn and together we moved into 828 East Adams, a hippie-house known as "the mansion". Rent was low, times were high, and music reverberated. Lynn liked me; I used her. She was attached; I was detached. I was in full rebellion against God. I remember steadying a wobbly kitchen table by mashing Gideon pocket Bibles under two wooden legs. The communal house adopted a stray dog and I named the sickly animal "Jehovah".

The Library Science program accepted me and my curriculum altered course. I attended three library classes that Fall: Reference & Bibliography, Card Catalog, and Children's Books. The workload proved overwhelming and I barely squeaked out C's. My bohemian lifestyle contributed not a little.

An assortment of odd balls moved into the mansion, only to reside a day or two. Dozens were attracted to parties, to dope, who knows? The more I struggled to be free, the more I fell into bondage. I barely survived that Fall term, managing to stay off the street, out of jail, and outside the psych ward. Things had to change. In December, I abandoned Lynn and vacated the mansion, packing my worldly belongings into the big Catalina.

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I faced a three-week Christmas break, no place to live and little money. I was overcome with wanderlust and got the crazy notion to hitchhike cross country. I figured this would be a trial by ordeal; a test of pluck and resolve. I parked my car in the Theta Chi lot and Mark drove me to his home in Pendleton, Indiana. I stayed with him overnight and departed the next day.

On December 19, at 9:45 in the cold of morning, Mark dropped me along Interstate 80. I was wearing two sets of pants, two shirts, wool socks with boots, a heavy coat, ear-flap cap, and ski gloves. Over top of all this, I poked my head through an Alaskan parka. I lugged a navy duffle bag filled with raingear, extra socks, snacks, soap, flashlight, transistor radio, canteen, pen and tablet. Into the toe of my sock I tucked my life savings—eighty-six dollars. My hand-drawn sign read: “San Francisco”.

I kept a log of my rides to Longview. These are my fourteen encounters during the two-and-a-half-day slog:

1. From Pendleton, Indiana, to Interstate 80 by Mark.
2. I-80 to Indianapolis by a couple who have a kid at Purdue.
3. Indianapolis to Kansas City by two freaks on a honeymoon from Connecticut.
4. Kansas City on I-80 only two exits by four high-school kids.
5. Two more exits on I-80 by a guy with a GTO. His back tires were falling apart.
6. Three more exits by a GI stationed at Fort Leavenworth.
7. One exit by guy in a VW. He gave me a swig of whiskey.
8. Along I-80 about two hundred miles in VW van. I slept a little.
9. From Oakley, Kansas, to Welles Nevada, about 1100 miles, twenty-three hours with Jack and Betty. Roads were bad. Passed through Denver at 10 AM Sunday.
10. From Welles to Sacramento. Guy who was driving the VW van was a hitchhiker himself. Couple was sleeping in back. I slept for several hours. Lots of ice and snow.
11. From I-80 in Sacramento off exit 100 yards. Someone felt sorry for me. Stood for two hours near Sacramento to 11 AM. I drew a new cardboard sign that read, “North”.
12. From 1-5 outside Sacramento to the Albany exit in Oregon. Eight hours by Berkeley student. Said he was wanted for murder in California. Far out!
13. Got approached by cop who said hitchhiking is illegal in Oregon. Got picked up by hip couple to Vancouver, Washington.
14. To Longview, one block from home at eight in the evening on Monday.

I didn't tell my folks I was heading West, so they were stunned to see their prodigal son standing at the front door, grubby and disheveled. Dad and mom were in the midst of a charismatic home meeting. About twenty enthusiasts sat in the living room on fold-out chairs. I greeted the happy-clappy Christians, then took a hot shower and slept until noon on the following day.

The change I saw in my father was startling. He was effervescent, dressed in a flashy polyester leisure suit. He could not speak without joy bubbling in his voice. Dad had never liked restaurants, now he was eating out every

second day. He counted these as opportunities to witness the faith. Dad had become a thorough-going and effective evangelist. Mom was his full partner, ministering to the ladies.

I was in the Longview house for eight days, enduring incessant chatter about something called the “baptism in the Holy Spirit”. I didn’t do drugs at the house, but acted stoned so my family wouldn’t pester me. To any testimony they attempted, I’d nod my head and croak “far out”. The strategy seemed to work.

The family celebrated my twenty-first birthday followed by a big Christmas dinner. Six Zelens, six Foremans, and four Zimmermans sat around the dining room table to hear dad preach about Jesus and lead in group prayer. Frank shared with me about speaking in tongues, describing his recent experience on December 14. He gave me a book by some English guy named C.S. Lewis. I promised to read it on my return hitchhike. Don took me aside and said he would pay for my flight home, if only I would cut my long hair. Fat chance! Plus, I looked forward to my return adventure.

Jack sold real estate out of an office in Kalama. We talked as he drove me sixty miles south into Portland, dropping me off at 8 AM on December 28. It took me three and a half days to get back to Whiting. These are my twenty-seven rides:

1. Jack drove me from Longview to Portland on Interstate 5.
2. Two exits by a kid in a pickup. He needed me as a side view mirror.
3. Three exits by farmer in a pickup.
4. Long wait, then picked up by guy in beat-up '61 Chevy. I went about 150 miles.
5. To Redding, California, by a weird guy going to the Rose Bowl, about six hours.
6. To the San Francisco exit. He was an expert in artificial insemination. We conversed the whole way. He dropped me at 11:00 PM, now heading east on Interstate 80.
7. To Davis, California, by a Davis student, short ride.
8. Picked up by Davis cop whose wife is from Kokomo. He said I couldn't hitchhike on I-80, so he drove me one exit further dropping me off the big highway.
9. With a guy from Auburn who drove me a few exits into Auburn
10. Was in Auburn four hours in cold and dark! Got picked up by a trucker. I spaced and dozed to Reno where I was let out. Walked miles through Reno and Sparks. Made a new sign because I lost my original in Redding. It's easy to find cardboard.
11. To Salt Lake City by a student from Brigham Young. Got eight hours of fitful sleep.
12. Through Salt Lake City about five miles to city limits by a commuter. It was 5 PM Wednesday.
13. About twenty miles by guy in VW going home.
14. To Wyoming by guy from Georgia on vacation in '71 Pinto. I had a five-hour wait somewhere in Wyoming. City cop said if state cop found me it would be \$150 and ten days! I was shuddering cold and shook up.
15. Finally got picked up at 2:00 AM by trucker who slammed on brakes. He said I was crazy to be out in a blizzard. He drove me nineteen hours to Council Bluffs, Iowa. He bought me a meal along the way. I spent New Year's moment near Council Bluffs with my thumb extended. I know because I heard fireworks pop in the distance.
16. Drunk guy drove me through town a few miles.
17. To Des Moines by guy driving about 120 MPH. Slept most of way.
18. By trucker on exit. He drove me a few miles because he thought I was needy.
19. Man drove me another few miles east off of Interstate.

20. Back to I-80 by Des Moines about thirty miles.
21. Black dude to Iowa City. I drove his GTO the last thirty miles. He said he was an entertainer and dead tired.
22. Trucker to Moline, Illinois. He made an abrupt stop at exit to let me out and cop was right behind him. The cop gave him a ticket and me a warning not to hitchhike.
23. I walked off the roadbed to the on-ramp. I got a ride about ten miles to some small city and waited near I-80 for a few hours.
24. Guy going to Detroit took me to Route 41 and I-80. He got a speeding ticket.
25. Got a ride north to downtown Munster. Guy congratulated me on trek.
26. Another three-mile ride. Got to Hammond at 4:00 PM on New Year's Day.
27. Jeannie Grinsted (by pure coincidence) drove me to White Castle hamburgers. I looked up to Mr. Erikson's apartment window and saw the light on. We talked about my great adventure.

### 1971 to August

I hung around Whiting for a few days recovering from my arduous journey. I discovered Charlotte was now a raving Pentecostal. Dad had preached to her by telephone and my second sister was now speaking at me in tongues. I could not escape. Was the Hound of Heaven nipping at my heels?

I did some overdue accounting and withdrew my first student loan: \$1000 from the First Bank of Whiting. Big Jim Walker dropped me on Calumet Avenue and after a three-hour hitchhike I reunited with my abandoned car. The doors were frozen shut and the battery was dead, but I was happy to resume my university lifestyle.

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I didn't have a place to stay, but I had a pocket full of money. After a day of searching I found a suburban house on Lynda Lane, spent \$250 of bank money, and moved in. I was accompanied by Mark and two hippie friends. Each agreed to contribute \$30 per month, but their money was slow in coming. I met Jim Richardson who played guitar in a rock band. After moving in, Jim needed space to practice, so drums, guitars, and amplifiers occupied the living room. Two band members began to couch-sleep in the day and noise-make in the night. Everyone wanted to stay, but no one wanted to pay. After three months of expense, I abandoned the property forfeiting my \$100 deposit.

My grades recovered: An A, two B's and two C's. For the Honors Colloquium my group met in Dean Lawhead's house. These dozen hours a week were an island of tranquility in a sea of chaos. I hooked up with a few girls, but nothing clicked. I was intelligent, but unstable; attractive, then offensive. I suffered from ennui; weariness and discontent of soul.

During times of depression and hallucination, my soul—without prompting—reached back to my childhood days. I never recalled sermons or scripture verses. I rasped embedded hymns: "Praise Him! Praise Him! Jesus our blessed Redeemer. Sing, O earth, His wonderful love proclaim. Hail Him! Hail Him! Highest archangels in glory. Strength and honor give to his holy name." These words rescued me from abject despair.

My Catalina was back-smashed and three of us went to a local hospital. Our injuries were not serious, but the car was totaled and the driver uninsured. For the next several months I struggled without a vehicle. My thumb managed to get me back to Whiting every few weeks.

On a hitchhike north, a Purdue student picked me up near Lafayette. As we were talking on Highway 41, the driver scooted toward me and rubbed my thigh with his right hand. I shoved it away and he apologized. He said he was hoping I'd turn out gay. He added he was heading to a gay bar in Chicago and asked if I wanted to join him. Always wanting to broaden my horizons, I consented. It was an eye-opening evening. I drank a few cocktails while fending off several advances. The guy was cool and dropped me off at Walkers at about 3:00 AM.

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The stately Eliot Hall at BSU was reserved for seniors only. In the Spring term I discovered I had enough units to qualify, so I applied and took up residence. Regular sleep and meals helped me cope with depression. My roommate was a graduate student named Grubb, who led the "War Resistance League" on campus. Every week we gathered at an anti-war rally. I accumulated a new set of friends, some idealists, some rowdies, and some—like me—just wanting to make the scene.

I followed Grubb and soon became a protégé. I helped him pass out handbills emblazoned with the red clenched fist of civil disobedience. On April 30, a dozen of us anti-war demonstrators piled into the back of a U-Haul truck and headed to Washington, D.C. Our goal was to shut down the capitol. My button read, "If the government won't stop the war, the people will stop the government." My travel bag contained a camera, handbills, snacks and water. The driver stopped every hour to lift the back hatch giving us a breath of fresh air.

May first, 1971, was crazy. About 30,000 protesters camped out in West Potomac Park near the Washington Monument grooving to rock music and preparing for political action. A fellow traveler provided me with two hits of LSD. I experienced the biggest bummer of my life and partook in my last experiment with hallucinogenics.

It was really heavy stuff and with all the music and strange antics in the park, my mind freaked out—tasting sounds and hearing colors. My primary hallucination was that the world would end at dawn. The distant shining monument appeared to be the gates of heaven and chattering protestors huddled around fires appeared as demons from hell. I must have blown my mind because I found myself lying in a medical tent babbling about four horsemen of the apocalypse. I recovered my senses during the night.

At dawn on May 2, bullhorns announced the park would be cleared. I woke sleepers as helicopters buzzed overhead. A few dozen of us spilled onto a street to block traffic. When we saw D.C. police busting heads, we ran for it. Two in my May Day tribe were collared by the cops. The remainder jumped into a VW minibus to watch the action from a safer distance. I rested in a sanctuary church then spent the night with compatriots from Virginia.

On the evening of May 3, I headed to Indiana in an overstuffed car. My satchel went missing and I mourned the loss of undeveloped film. At 4:00 AM, as we were entering Muncie, a patrol car stopped us. They combed the car and the people in it, but found no dope. We spent a few hours in detention, then were released. May Day ended my protesting career. I still searched for meaning, but I knew I wouldn't find it in radical politics.

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I was at a pot party when I hooked up with Patty. I regret taking advantage of that freshman girl from Whiting. For a while I experienced the best the world had to offer. I remember having Patty in bed with me and my best friend Grubb sitting across from me in conversation. We were passing hashish back and forth when suddenly on the radio my favorite song sounded: *Eight Miles High*. For a split second I thought, "I have sex. I have comradeship. I have dope and I have rock & roll. O, Lord! Why am I so empty?"

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Soon my third year of college ended. Patty's father provided me with a ride home. I told my girlfriend I was going away for the summer. With a tear, she gave me her Saint Christopher's medal. I hitchhiked to Pendleton and spent a week with Mark stowing some of my goods in his basement. I remember lying under a full moon in his backyard, bundled in sleeping bags, rambling on to each other through the night.

Mark's parents drove the two of us to Whiting and seven packed into Char's station wagon. Mark and I alternated driving while my sister managed four kids in the back. We traveled on the cheap; eating sandwiches and pausing for sleep only one night. Charlotte, Jimmy, Shelley, Chrissy, and Danny sheltered inside the car, while Mark and I stretched under the stars. In the wilderness of Wyoming I awoke with a rabbit refusing to vacate my chest.

Charlotte was an incessant talker. Her sole topic was God—the Father, the Son, and especially the Holy Ghost. Mark drank in the gospel, asking question after question. I found myself an unwitting Bible teacher. Mark grew in knowledge as I meditated on the words pouring from my own mouth. I knew the Holy Spirit was gunning for me.

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When I arrived at the John Foreman house, I fell under conviction. I perceived spiritual battle. Was my soul the object of targeted prayer? Were dark powers at work—like those who moved the Ouija Board? I suspected such. Mom embraced Mark and called it a “Pentecostal hug”. Mark told me he didn't know what “Pentecostal” meant.

Mark had only to observe my dad to grasp the meaning. Dad was a Pentecostal dynamo. In later years someone wrote this testimonial:

John Foreman was a spiritual mentor to me and led me into the baptism of the Holy Spirit at a Full Gospel meeting in Longview. My life of miracles began that night. He was both a teacher and a role model for me. I attended the home prayer and Bible study meetings in Longview and saw every kind of miracle. Not only did I watch as John prayed for people's legs to be lengthened and see people's legs grow before my very eyes, but John prayed for me and then I prayed for others when I got home and their legs were healed as well.

Mark and I entered into many rap sessions with my family, especially with Frank and his new girlfriend Lelia. As religious renegades we escaped to Lake Sacajawea, smoked cigarettes, and talked about Jesus. Could it all be true? We could not refute their testimony nor deny their joy. But being a sinner does provide its pleasures. Were we willing to forego our debauchery?

Mark told me this story of his conversion: One night while he was trying to sleep, he felt under attack by demons. Dad and mom were still awake so he rose to talk with them. Finally, they prayed for him and he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

I felt abandoned after Mark's conversion and recognized pride as an obstacle to faith's return. If mom and dad were right about this Holy Spirit business, then I must be wrong. I had been arguing with Frank and others too long to concede.

After three weeks, Mark, Charlotte and the kids returned to Whiting. Without a job East or West, I lingered in Longview. Dad had purchased a 1961 VW Beetle. He allowed me to putter around town, mostly to shop and visit nearby family.

Dad was often a first adopter of gadgets. He lent me use of his new cassette tape player to hear famed Pentecostals such as Kenneth Hagin. I also watched TV shows by faith healers like Kathryn Kuhlman, and read several books by Christian apologist C.S. Lewis. While dad favored the fervor of Hagin and Kuhlman, I appreciated the reflective reason of Lewis.

My father was the newly elected president of Full Gospel Business Men Fellowship International” (FGBMFI). On the second weekend in August, the fellowship held a convention in Boise, Idaho. I knew I could not return to college without Jesus at the center of my life. It was now or never. Which would win out?

## Chapter 8

# Revived

*beginning on August 12, 1971  
and continuing for 1 year, 3 months, and 13 days*

*“And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off,  
his father saw him, and had compassion. (Luke 15:20)”*

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Like the prodigal son who came to his senses while mired in a stinky pig sty, I returned repentant to the sweet fragrance of my Heavenly Father. My revival was not splashy. Still waters run deep.

### August 1971

In August of 1971, the day fast approached for my return to Indiana. I believe God orchestrated the circumstances. Dad had long planned a drive to his Full Gospel convention in Boise. I agreed to accompany him. We talked the whole distance, but in deference, dad suppressed his glee. He realized inside I was kicking and screaming.

Of his entry into the Christian faith, C. S. Lewis famously remarked he became “the most reluctant convert in all England”. I can identify. My reluctance was not due to a lack of belief. I totally embraced the Christian gospel. I was reluctant because I counted the cost—which encompassed everything. I had adopted the view of *Invictus*: “I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul”. If I chose to follow Jesus, there would have to be a new master and captain. I was reluctant to surrender my throne and to abandon my helm.

The featured speaker was a man named George Otis, former CEO of Lear Jet Inc. and baptizer of singer Pat Boone. While dad whooped in the main convention hall, I joined a young people’s rally. I knew when the presentation concluded, the time had come for me to re-commit my life to Jesus. After stepping forward, I followed a dozen initiates into a gigantic hotel room. George Otis prayed for me; I was filled with the Holy Spirit; I spoke in tongues. My experience was genuine but subdued. I was not an emotive person. My ecstasy arrived in a rush of joy and in a healing of heart.

Of course, my dad and mom rejoiced at my “baptism in the Holy Ghost”. The lost sheep had returned. Yet the lamb continued to graze on the margin of the fold. Charismatic emphasis on healing, prophecy, and prosperity struck me as misdirected.

I came to view those baptized with the Holy Ghost along a spectrum: 1. Spirit Filled, 2. Pentecostal, 3. Charismatic, and 4. Holy Roller. I counted myself in group one, remained comfortable with group two, skeptical with group three, and put off by group four. My intellectual bent and contemplative nature disposed me toward the *Mere Christianity* of Lewis rather than the particular Pentecostalism of Oral Roberts. Still, I found true *agape* love among all Spirit-filled believers.

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Dad blessed me with a gift of his VW Beetle. I packed it to the window line, and installed a top rack for suit cases. Accompanied by my sixteen-year-old niece, I began my journey east. Debbie had felt suffocated at home

and leapt at the chance for adventure with her hippie uncle. We paused at coffee shops and slept outdoors. Once Debbie fainted in a stuffy phone booth. I kept a cautious eye on her for the next thousand miles and advised her to cut back on cigarettes. After we arrived in Whiting, I stayed with Charlotte while Debbie visited her cousins, Bonny and Julienne.

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I drove my Bug to Pendleton, picked up Mark, and we settled in Muncie. Truly Mark was a converted man. He chuckled as he described how his parents marveled at the change. My companion and I had metamorphosed from “freak” to “Jesus freak”. Our outward appearance remained much the same, but our talk and demeanor had transformed.

While cruising down Riverside Avenue, I noticed new construction and a sign proclaiming the “Christian Student Foundation”. This was the same outfit I hung out with in 1968. I stopped to investigate and conversed with Gary Edwards, the campus pastor. As I spoke with excitement of my baptism in the Holy Spirit, he appeared pleased, but apprehensive. I told him I considered myself a card-carrying member of the Disciples of Christ, but with an additional blessing.

Gary offered me an upstairs room for the Fall term at no cost. He was unable to charge, because walls were unplastered and wood dust filled the air. He also asked me not to advertise my Pentecostal bent. As a revived Methodist, Mark found a nook a few blocks down the street.

Instantly, I acquired a bevy of new friends. Marge was CSF live-in secretary, like a house mother. I called her the “Bee’s Knees”. Ken, Jim, Steve, and Paul were co-habitants. Girls like Susie, Laura, Cookie, and Boston hung around downstairs at all hours. I slept on a floor mat and grabbed meals as I could. The CSF felt like a sanctified version of the Adams Street Hippie House. I was loving my senior year!

Bible study and prayer became part of my daily routine. One night in a dream, I heard a distinct voice repeat three times: “fifteen John five.” I awoke and guessed the words referred to a Bible verse, but had no clue as to content. I turned to John 15:5 and read: “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.” I determined to abide in Jesus all of my days. My friend, Susie, was gifted in embroidery. A vine and branch soon adorned the backside of my blue jean-jacket.

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The Gospel of John became my favorite book of the Bible. Several of us residents wanted to publish a Jesus Paper and I suggested calling it *The Door* taken from John 10:9: “I am the door; by me if any enter in, he shall be saved, and go in and out, and find pasture”. We worked a few weeks, writing, typing, cutting, copying, and drawing in order to publish *Door* issue number one. A caption on my column read, “If you’re not close to God, guess who moved?” Kenny Hopper printed two hundred copies of the twelve-page paper in Indianapolis.

We promoted the first day of October as the Jesus Trip Festival, headlined by Pat Boone and supported by a multitude of Christian speakers and entertainers. It was a full day of witnessing our faith, passing out “one-way” buttons, and distributing *The Door*. The church hillside venue was filled with young people sitting on blankets. Two of my friends-to-be came to the Lord that day, Carol Bennett and Jim Rich. I also met Merle, Denny and Sunny, adding them to my roster of Christian brothers and sisters.

An assortment of Jesus people attended an assembly at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell. The atmosphere reminded me of my parents' charismatic gathering back in Longview. We clapped, shouted, and sang choruses. My favorite came from the gospel of John:

We are one in the Spirit. We are one in the Lord.  
And we pray that our unity will someday be restored.  
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love.

For young people, these joyous occasions provided a safe space to flirt and pair up. I found myself in continual prayer that God would bring the right "Christian sister" into my life. An unvoiced question hovered over every female encounter. "Could this be the one"? Sexual tension abounded. I remember a time when Jim was interested in Susie, Susie was interested in Chris, Chris was interested in Sunny, and to complete the circle, Sunny was interested in Jim. Romance was a merry-go-round, each participant stretching a hand to take hold of the brass ring.

My Fall classes were mostly in Library Science and Education. I remember a Teaching Practicum class in which I was required to observe classroom teachers. I attended Clark School for three days, sitting in Mr. Roman's history class. I felt odd at twenty-one, older than students, but younger than staff. I met a neighbor of Arlene. She told me my ex-girlfriend was about to marry and the groom-to-be looked a lot like me. Was I to laugh or cry?



To receive a public-school credential, I needed to student-teach for one full term. In preparation for the winter quarter, Lynn cut my long hair and Kadee helped me acquire a suit of clothes from a second-hand store. Charlotte arranged for me to rent space from Mrs. Walker, her mother-in-law. As I was driving my VW Bug to Whiting, the engine threw a rod and had to be replaced. It took one month and a bank loan to recover my little Beetle.

Following a Thanksgiving holiday with Charlotte, I began teaching at Whiting Junior High School. I shadowed Mr. Mihalo as he taught social studies to three classes of seventh graders and one of eighth graders. It took some time to adjust to a coat and tie.

For ten days, I observed Mr. Mihalo in action. I interacted with students only when he called upon me. That changed suddenly when his mother passed away and he took a month's leave. I felt like I was thrown to the wolves. I learned much about children and more about myself. Here's a story I wrote about student teaching:

I was in the midst of a history lesson when a spunky girl interrupted me and said, "Mr. Foreman, your face really looks shiny". She was being purposely disrespectful and I ignored her as if her comment didn't faze me. However, before I returned to school the next morning, I found some talcum powder and applied it generously to my face. I really rubbed it in so that my face wouldn't appear shiny. As I began teaching with my powdered face, the same girl interrupted me and said, "Gee, Mr. Foreman, how come your face looks so white?" This was a game and as we glared at each other we both realized that student had conquered teacher.

When I met with Mildred Evans, my BSU supervisor, she offered advice on handling my mouthy girls and rowdy boys. "They won't care that you know, until they know that you care."

My nephew, Jimmy Walker, sat in my advanced seventh-grade class. He told me the definition of a “googol”, stating it was “a one followed by one hundred zeros.” I was impressed. He added, “A googolplex is a one followed by a googol of zeros.”

Then I discussed the offensive spunky girl with him. “What if I made Jamey go to the blackboard and write ‘I won’t talk in class’ one googol times?” He laughed. We enjoyed our conversations.

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My landlady, Mrs. Walker, was a difficult person to live with. I remember using a squirt of her catsup on one of my hotdogs. She scolded me to no end. Just after the Christmas break, I relocated a few blocks to the apartment of Bill and Yolanda Butler. Bill was a family friend from the First Church of Christ. He drove me to Lafayette, Indiana, where I picked up my repaired VW, forking over \$400 of bank-loan money. I then proceeded to Muncie resuming college life with my menagerie of friends. I was happy to ditch my monkey suit and return to denimwear.

A few girls in the house baked me a birthday cake and a dozen residents helped me blow out twenty-two candles. I disappointed Charlotte by spending Christmas Day at Mark’s home and New Year’s Eve at the Christian Student Foundation.

### **1972 to November**

New Year’s Day holds a sweet memory. The foundation provided a supervised space in which to welcome the arrival of 1972. I initiated a long conversation with a pretty high school senior named Jo Caine. We talked for hours about the ways of Jesus and the ways of the world. After sharing a personal problem, she cried, I embraced, then we kissed. I pushed her to arm’s length and sighed. Jo blushed. She was too young and I was too old. We exchanged a few letters but both recognized a romance that could not be.

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Returning to Whiting, life improved. I now had my commuter Beetle. Bill and Yo were very kind to me and I received much more than I gave. I grew to enjoy my boisterous junior high students. I managed to finagle a video camera from the athletic department and to record students as they recited lessons. My kids were thrilled to mug for the camera and view themselves for the first time on TV. The boys and girls knew I cared about them. My BSU supervisor sat in on my class and commended my pedagogical action. For the winter term she awarded me with eight hours of A and seven hours of B.

I hung out sometimes with my old Whiting girlfriend Patty. She would drop by my place and we would flit from food joint to shopping mall. With some of her crowd she drove me to Chicago to see Donovan in concert. Soon Patty stopped dropping by. Without sex as a bond, we discovered little in common.

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In March, I moved back to Muncie for my final college term. Merle agreed to shelter me at his house, 401 Riverside. I admired his gracious hospitality. A constant flow of guests streamed through his front door, lounging on sofas, petting cats, and sipping coffee. Some were my friends and some were Merle’s friends. In the end, all became our mutual friends.

I was active in sharing Jesus with fellow students. I was outspoken in class, pushing back against professors who mocked the Bible. Some atheist debaters got the better of me. At times my belief system seemed incredulous: How could God send people to hell? Is Jesus truly the only way? Why is there suffering? Two

things kept me on track. First was my encounter with the Ouija Board. That transcendent experience was undeniable and unexplainable through materialism.

Even greater was the testimony of the Paraclete; God's own Spirit witnessing to mine. I learned the distinction between "showing God" and "knowing God". I could not easily demonstrate God's existence, but I never doubted His indwelling. The Holy Spirit was my ace in the hole, "the defeater-defeater" so to speak. Whatever clever argument could defeat me: whatever sour mood deflate me; the inner witness of the Spirit could in turn defeat. Often, the assurance came after I whispered to myself in miraculous tongues.

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Frank and I kept up a correspondence. He was preparing for medical school and had set a July date to marry Lelia. My serious little brother desired to put away his "childish things," specifying WLS radio, sports trophies, and marvel comics. At his behest, I filled a large cardboard box with comic books and shipped his ex-treasure to Great Neck, New York. Frank also encouraged me to read more C. S. Lewis; and I did, everything I could lay my hands on. Lewis became my exemplar of a Christian who was both faithful and intellectual. He showed me I didn't have to abandon my academic brain to embrace my religious heart.

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My final classes were History of High School, Selection of Library Material, Library Administration, Cartography, and an Honors Project. I was too distracted for rigorous study and my final grades were all B's. My four-year grade point average at Ball State was 3.242 out of 4.0

My honor's paper was titled: "The Jesus Movement: Revival of the 70's?" in which I compared the current Jesus movement to various awakenings and revivals of previous centuries. After Dean Steven Hall accepted the proposal, I procrastinated. Then I rushed, staying up for two nights while a female friend flirted and retyped. The final product was sloppy, besmirched with white-out. My sponsor appreciated the effort, even though I misspelled his name as "Stephan" throughout the paper.

In addition to my college classes, I sat with a Lutheran pastor to learn New Testament Greek. I didn't progress much more than the alphabet and a few dozen vocabulary words, but he inspired me to keep up my Bible studies.

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As the Spring term wound down, Denny led an expedition to a local cave. He called his passion "spelunking". Sunny and Boston joined us squeezing down tight shafts and squirming over wet rocks. The girls refused to trudge further when bats flapped past their ears. By the time we fled to the car, the four of us were soaked to the bone, miserable, and complaining. Oddly, the next morning we bragged to others about our great adventure.

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On May 24, 1972, I graduated with honors from Ball State University. My family came for the occasion. When my name was read out, I rose from the folding chair, strolled across the lawn on the main quad, and received my Bachelor of Arts diploma. My major was Secondary Education with an endorsement in Social Studies. My minor was Library Science.

I posed in my blue cap and gown, an honors cord around my neck. Dad chided me because I wore combat boots under the gown. The photo in front of the Christian Student Foundation shows me in the center, flanked by dad and mom. Frank, Lelia, Charlotte, Jimmy, Shelley, Chris, and Danny are huddled around. Other pictures of the

day show dozens of my Christian buddies smiling back at my camera. It was funny. Every time I pointed the lens at Frank, Lelia would leap into his arms.

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After a night in Muncie, the ten of us car-pooled up to Whiting. Dad bought an old pick-up truck to haul the last of his belongings retrieved from Rose's basement. Then our caravan headed west. Dad drove mom in the station wagon; Frank and Lelia followed in the pick-up, while Grandma Rose accompanied me in the VW bug. Rose peered out the side window mile after mile, often remarking, "How can there be a population crisis? There's so much open land."

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In Longview, my dad operated in full Pentecostal mode, fasting every morning and praying through the night. He longed for the miraculous, something beyond mundane leg-lengthening and slaying in the spirit. God granted his petition. The story goes as follows: Dad was working at the Reynolds cable plant where two-inch diameter strands of aluminum cable tighten around eight-foot wooden spools. One morning he heard shouts and rushed to a co-worker who was squeezed in a death-grip of winding cable. Operators unwound an unresponsive body and set it on the pavement. Dad lifted the victim in his arms and prayed fervently. Breath returned to his co-worker as an ambulance carried him to the hospital. The man survived without lasting injury to his body or brain.

The October issue of *Voice* magazine—a publication of FGMFI—ran a three-page article with the headline: "I prayed for a dead man, and literally saw a life loved back. I firmly believe that faith and assurance was the result of fasting and prayer." John Foreman became a celebrity in the Full Gospel community. People in search of miracles flocked to our house.

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A looming event was the wedding of Frank Foreman and Lelia Rose set for July first. On the Saturday before the ceremony, dad planned one last fling with his two unmarried sons. His goal was to leave the house for Mount Saint Helens at five in the morning. It would take a full sixteen-hours of daylight to reach the summit and return. However, Frank and I were lazy and we didn't head out until seven. The climb was a lark for the two of us and about half way up, dad spotted a serious climber quick-stepping downhill. After a powwow, dad ruefully announced we could not attain the summit that day.

Frank and I were not unhappy at the turn of events. We each had brought along a small patch of tarp and planned to sled down the mountain side. Things did not go well for me. The layer of snow contained pockets of exposed lava-rock. Once I gained momentum, I could not stop. Excitement turned into terror. Seeing a large outcropping ahead, I pivoted off the plastic, digging in my toes and fingers. Thankfully, I survived the harrowing slide with only a bruise to my ego.

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Frank had invited his Seattle land lady to the wedding. He asked me to pick up Sylvia and drive her back to Longview. On the return trip down a small county road I became confused not knowing whether to turn right or left. My VW plowed straight ahead up a dirt embankment, breaking a front axle. I was unhurt, but poor Sylvia bumped her head.

The wedding was supposed to start at noon on the shores of Lake Sacajawea. Folding chairs and tables were in place. All participants waited for the delinquent best man. At 12:15 I hurriedly donned my tuxedo and sped to the lake. I was breathless, Sylvia was dazed, and the ceremony was fashionably late. Lucy Rose served as

bridesmaid, so I escorted her down a grassy aisle between chairs. Frank and Lelia exchanged vows under a large Douglas Fir. A singer and guitarist performed *Wedding Song* by Peter Stookey: "Wherever two or more of you are gathered in His name, there is love."

Back on twenty-third avenue, we held a reception for the newlyweds. Lelia opened gifts handed to her by eager-eyed Jenny and Laura. Tall Susie Zelen caught the bride's bouquet flung from the back patio. I can't remember how Sylvia returned to Seattle, certainly not by me. I eventually sold my broken Bug for \$450, getting cash for the undamaged engine.

A few days later, the Full Gospel Businessmen held a convention in San Francisco. By the time dad and I arrived at the downtown hotel, Frank and Lelia had already enjoyed two nights of honeymoon. We bopped around the Bay, gawking at the landmarks, before driving back to Longview.

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By mid-July Don had left his position with Reynolds and managed a Hardware store in Chehalis. Zelens purchased a farm in the little town of Napavine, complete with horses, gardens, and duck pond. Jack migrated with him, leaving real estate sales and assisting Don with appliance delivery.

Jack and Barbara bought a funky fixer-upper in Napavine. They were in the midst of major rehabilitation when their family suddenly expanded. I was first to learn about Patrick's arrival. Alone in the Longview house, an adoption agency telephoned asking for Jack. They said it was urgent. Born on June 15, 1972, Patrick entered the family a few months later.

Almost simultaneously, Barbara's son from her first marriage arrived in Longview for an alleged "vacation". Alan had spent most of his eleven years with his father in Scotland. The vacation turned permanent and unexpectedly both a newborn and a pre-teen were part of the Foreman gang. Skinny Alan was fascinated by all things American. He fattened up on hot dogs the entire summer.

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I found myself at a crossroads with no clue of future employment. Where would my life lead? First, I had looked for teaching positions in Indiana. I discovered a glutted market but that was okay. I wanted to move west anyway. In Longview, I handwrote one-hundred letters to school districts throughout the state of Washington. I received only a handful of rejection responses and one offer at an Indian Reservation that quickly evaporated.

In August I received a certified letter from the selective service in Hammond, Indiana, and reported to an assessment station in Portland. I passed the induction physical with flying colors. Uncertainty plagued my days and apprehension kept me awake at night. I wasn't keen on combat in Viet Nam, and applied to the Air Force for an aviation position. A few interviews looked promising, but then I failed a mechanical aptitude test. I was disheartened but not surprised.

Salvation from military service arrived from an unexpected quarter. Way back in March, I had visited a Peace Corps booth in the Ball State commons. I had casually filled out all the papers and mailed in my application. I had forgotten about it.

After the Air Force rejected me, I received a timely letter from the Peace Corps offering me a position in South Korea as a middle school teacher. I telephoned in my agreement and received a confirmation document. I was committed to begin service in November as a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV).

Just two days later, I received “Greetings from the President”. I had been drafted into the U. S. Army. Fortunately, since I had already enrolled into the Peace Corps, my military duty was deferred. I had ridden an employment roller coaster for three months and was glad to step off.

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Waiting for my PC start date, I found time on my hands. Every morning I walked around Lake Sacajawea and every evening I watched wood flicker in the fireplace. I was in the habit of strolling to a Salvation Army store to augment my wardrobe. On one visit I stumbled across a display of old Victrola records. At first, I bought a few World War One recordings, playing them on my portable record player: “We don’t want the bacon. What we want is a piece of the Rhine”. Then I purchased a 1930s phonograph with a crank wind-up and listening horn. My collection sored to over three hundred antique disks.

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The Peace Corps sponsored an orientation session at the *Heart of Denver* Hotel. From October 21 to 23, I met many of my future comrades: Allen, Jim, Glen, Sherry, Karen, and Pat. I also met some of my soon-to-be Korean and American staff. We listened to lectures on language, culture, and survival.

I learned that Korea was called the “Hermit Kingdom” because of its self-imposed isolation. Western missionaries did not set foot on the peninsula until the 1880s. At the nexus of three world powers (China, Japan and Russia), it’s a near miracle that little Korea maintained a separate language and culture for three thousand years. It was the Korean War of 1950-52 that turned this obscure nation into a household word.

My group of middle-school teachers was designated “K-25”, the twenty-fifth cohort to serve in Korea. I was pleased God saw fit to direct my path in this unexpected direction.

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Rather than catch a return flight to Portland, I decided to visit my family and friends in Indiana. I had planned to hitchhike, but a Colorado cop disabused me of that notion. Instead I took a thirty-nine dollar/thirty-hour bus ride to Hammond. Charlotte picked me up at the station and I stayed with the Walkers for five days. I loved my sister and her four children. It was tearful to leave them.

I hitchhiked to Muncie on Halloween, landing at the Christian Student Foundation. Several dear friends were hanging out there, and when word got out that Chris had arrived, even more came to greet me. We gabbed through the night. The fellowship was fantastic. I thought “Is this what heaven is like?”

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I stayed in Muncie a few more days, then traveled to Indianapolis. I met Carol tooling around the city in a new Carman Gia. She offered to drive me back to Denver, but wanted a female companion. After a long phone call, Sunny agreed to accompany us. I liked Sunny a lot and I think she liked me. But we were both shy and a romantic conversation never ensued. I was not commitment averse, rather rejection opposed.

The three of us drove to Whiting to stay overnight with Charlotte, then we began our westward journey. Somewhere west of the Mississippi River, Carol suggested we drive all the way to the coast. With three in agreement, we changed course. I was glad I possessed a Gulf credit card to pay for the miles of gasoline.

Traveling through South Dakota, we were listening to the radio. In a forty-eight-state landslide, President Richard Nixon had defeated George McGovern. The Democrat failed to carry even his home state—through which we were then driving.

The travel was not all pleasant. We got tired and cranky at times, mostly about when to stop and where to stay. I booked a single-bed hotel room in Wyoming for nine dollars, then snuck in the two girls. From there it was non-stop to Longview with Carol and I taking turns behind the wheel. The Cascades were treacherous with snow and I almost slid the little car into a ditch.

My Hoosier friends spent a few blissful days in the evergreen state but soon it was time for them to return home. I gave Carol the Gulf card with instructions to destroy it when she arrived in Indiana. I sent dad money from Korea to pay off the \$150 gas charges.

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I spent a full week at “Uncle Donald’s Farm”. I looked after Alan and the Zelen kids as they traversed the Lewis County Fair. Debbie was trolling for boys; Susie and Nancy rode on horses; I helped Don John with amusement park rides; while Alan scarfed down hot dogs and cotton candy. I also earned a hundred dollars by charging people to carpark in Don’s hardware store lot. With the help of Don and Jack, I constructed a sturdy treehouse near the pooppy duckpond.

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Back in Longview, I began filling my overseas bags, collecting items that would tide me over the next two years. I cassette-recorded five hours of rock & roll and five hours of classical. I compiled a rolodex of addresses for international correspondence and filled an album with photographs. I packed by Interlinear Greek New Testament and three books by C.S. Lewis.

I also sorted belongings for storage, schlepping boxes of memorabilia, cartons of 78 RPM records, and odd pieces of furniture up into the garage attic. I determined to burn every trace of the faithless Arlene. I collected her love letters, her slides and photographs, then one-by-one consigned them to flame. I wanted to obliterate the very memory of that heart-crusher. Once again bitter tears flowed. “Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all?” Alfred Lord Tennyson must have never run across the likes of Arlene.

Thanksgiving at the farm doubled as my going away party. Dad thanked the Almighty for a bounty of both food and family. I felt as stuffed as my fifty-pound bag. As I looked at friendly faces and familiar surroundings, Korea seemed an infinite distance and two years an eternity. Yet I longed for the voyage.

Two days later, on November 25, dad and Frank accompanied me to Sea-Tac Airport. We were sharing a fast-food meal when I began to recognize familiar Denver faces. Dad laid hands on my head and Frank prayed. We walked together hefting giant suitcases. As I stood in the metal-detecting queue, my father and brother spoke a last word then retreated out of sight. I began to re-acquaint myself with fellow PCVs from K-25. A new chapter of life opened. I was about to board a jet plane and launch into the Far-Eastern unknown.

## Chapter 9

# Launched

*beginning on November 25, 1972  
and continuing for 1 year, 4 months, and 15 days*

*“Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see. (Ecclesiastes 11:9)”*

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During my entire Korean adventure, I kept a daily journal, filling five notebooks over the course of 655 days. Journaling filled three needs. First, I anticipated my time abroad would be a watershed event so I wanted to record my experience, preserving a written record of this sojourn. Second, I lived an isolated existence, a big-nosed Westerner in a sea of Korean faces. Putting to paper my deepest feelings provided therapeutic release. Finally, journaling clarified my thoughts. As Flannery O’Connor once remarked, “I write because I don’t know what I think until I read what I say.”

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My flight to Tokyo took about eleven hours. I talked and played cards with a businessman seated next to me. I was impressed with a stewardess in my section. She was good-looking and read her Bible in spare moments. I was too shy to speak with her, so I slipped her a note. Miss Brabant and I exchanged a few letters.

At the Tokyo Airport I passed through immigration, health certification, and customs then bussed into the giant metropolis. Downtown Tokyo was ablaze with neon, most of the signs flashing in English. I slept soundly in a small hotel room and almost missed the return bus ride to the airport.

Once again, I passed through immigration and customs at the Seoul Airport, this time greeted by American diplomats. My cohort of thirty-five PCVs boarded a bus for our training location, the city of Chun Chon, capitol of Kang Wan Province.

We arrived at the King Sejong Hotel where our training began the next day. I can remember mixing with four groups of people: fellow PCVs from K-25, American teachers and mentors who were mostly former volunteers, Korean language teachers, and Korean waiters and office workers. I was given a name tag with my new Korean name, “Oh-Song-Min”. The “Oh-min” sounded like “Foreman” and the “Song” translates as “Saint” or “Christ” or Chris”.

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The first few weeks whizzed by. Initially, my roommate was John Bell, but because he was such a heavy smoker, I asked for a switch. Jim McGuire became my second roommate and turned into my best friend. Our schedule looked like this: Korean language from eight in the morning to noon; lunch to one; language again until three; followed by some kind of ESL training until dinner at six. On most evenings there was an optional cultural event.

As part of my classwork, an American instructor asked students to write down initial impressions of the Hermit Kingdom. My report filled one side of lined paper:

Before my arrival in Korea I had only a vague notion of what this strange corner of the world might look like. I was told in training that if I were assigned to a small village, I may not see another Westerner for weeks! *Wow*, I thought. *There's a place I can live untouched by American culture?*

I was rudely awakened in Tokyo when neon signs painted the skyline in English. Then on the bus ride from Seoul to Chun Chon, I saw field workers harvesting a cabbage crop, oxen pulling a cart. I was exulting in how absolutely foreign this view was to my eyes. Then I noticed a smashed Budweiser can by the side of the road. Ugh.

I thought I'd experience something truly Korean so I went to a local tea room. As soon as I sat down, the waitress dashed to the stereo to put on "Tell Laura I Love Her". America, won't you ever leave me alone?

I have mixed feelings of this American hegemony into Korean culture. I'm proud to see my own values being accepted. Yet, I wish Koreans would not be so gung-ho about discarding their rich heritage in favor of Coca Cola, white shirt with tie, and guitars. It is true I may go for weeks without seeing a Western face, but I can't pass an hour without seeing the Western influence.

I'm beginning to accept this—I think. Korea is a hybrid, a four-thousand-year-old culture that has decided it's better to bend to the West than to break to the East. The saturation of Korea with American influence is sad to me, but inevitable in a world where Seoul is only a twelve-hour flight from San Francisco.

The Korean language was difficult for me to grasp. I discovered my pronunciation improved when I mimicked native speakers. I would make Koreans laugh by sounding just like the tape recordings. Superficially my speech was good, but I could never develop much depth. I didn't apply myself enough.

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After a few weeks of classroom drudgery, each of us volunteers went on an outing to visit an established PCV. I traveled to Seoul with some friends, then alone to the town of Kumsan. My Peace Corps host was Gus Stokes, my polar opposite, a want-to-be sports reporter obsessed with the Redskins, liquor, and escorts. He voiced a distaste for all things Korean and went through the motions of teaching. I observed a few of his classes, then followed him to the Roman Club where he wished to educate me in drinking and whoring. He bought us a few bourbons and explained I could procure a girl for just one-thousand won (\$2.50) for the night. I partook of the liquor, but no girls showed up. We returned to his guest house at curfew—ten o'clock.

The next day, December 22, was a national holiday, the inauguration of President Pak Chung Hee. After dark, we walked into the bar again. This is my journal entry:

Just after Gus and I sat down and ordered drinks, a young girl walked through the door and snuggled up to Gus. She was all made up with ruby red lips. Gus said, "Chris, let me introduce you to my girlfriend".

I politely bowed and she giggled. *Wait a minute*, I thought. *I didn't know Gus had a Korean girlfriend.*

Gus continued, “And I have a girlfriend for you too. She wants to go home with you.” From out the shadows a young lady stepped forward and winked at me. She was so pretty. My heart leapt.

My mind raced between *yes* and *no*. Finally, I blurted “anyo” (no) and backed away. Gus stared in puzzlement as I fled from the club.

I later thanked God He enabled me to flee the Roman Club. If I had hesitated one more moment; if I had spent that one night in carnal pleasure, I can only guess how my future may have altered. Thank you, Lord, for provoking me to run the path of Joseph Bar Jacob as he fled the arms of Potiphar’s wife.

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When I returned to Chun Chon, I read accumulated letters from home. Along with my parents and the Zelens, Sunny had sent me a hand-drawn card complete with silly sayings. What could I make of it? Did silliness mean she was seeking serious relationship? Should I pursue her? I still couldn’t figure out girls.

My twenty-third birthday came and went. With Korean peninsula being sixteen time zones ahead of Ohio, I mused about when my birthday actually occurred. On Christmas day I attended a ten o’clock service at Chun Chon Holiness Church. I appreciated being in a throng of Christians as they sang familiar carols. I enjoyed bellowing the words in English

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On the day after Christmas I taught my first ESL class, team-teaching with Andrea. Our lesson plan was based on the “May I” pattern: “May I stand up?” “Yes, you may stand up.” I felt relaxed, but knew I could have done better. We spent an afternoon, evaluating our performance.

On New Year’s Eve, several friends and I hiked to a local Buddhist temple. I didn’t make it to the top. My big flat boots were too slippery on the snowy grass. After dinner, we gathered in the wedding hall—our activity center—for a party. I wandered around conversing with many and talking about Jesus to a few. I went to my room to pray-in the new year. I heard gongs and shouts announce its arrival.

**1973**