

Voices Never Heard

Compiled by Henry Sturgis



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An Introduction to *Voices Never Heard*

Henry Sturges

To have a voice is to be able to speak about your experience, your beliefs, and the events of your life. To have a voice is one of the rights guaranteed by the Constitution. His voice is one of the many things that is taken from a “pedophile” once he is outed. *Every Farthing Publications* cannot return most of the things that are lost to an outed pedophile: his family, a productive social role, his acceptance as a worthwhile person in society, his friends, his occupational options, his freedom and so on. But we can, in some small way, return his voice to him.

That’s what *Voices Never Heard* is about. It is the second book in what may expand into a series. The first was a book called *Social Garbage*. *Social Garbage* and *Voices Never Heard* contain very short autobiographical pieces by people who are, or have been, incarcerated for sexual offenses against children.

Most people are reluctant to hear the voice of a convicted sex offender. It is viewed as tainted along with the love that led him commit his ruthless crimes. The voice of a sex offender is dangerous. It might pollute the minds of the readers and influence them to commit crimes against children. The sex offender’s voice, along with his touch, destroys our innocence and the innocence of our children. So his voice is locked up in the prison along with the rest of his personal effects.

Why, then, should the voices of convicted sex offenders be made available to the general public? Why should you and I hear what they have to say? After all, we already know what the pedophile is, and we already know the terrible damage he inflicts on societies most vulnerable members. We are certain of his essential depravity. We know that he is evil incarnate.

There are so many things that humanity has known with certainty throughout its history:

- The world is flat
- Blacks are a sub human species.
- Jews are scum.
- Gays are disgusting.
- Masturbation causes insanity.
- Women should not have a voice in the family or in society.
- It’s OK for one nation to oppress and exploit another.

- “Recovered memories” provide us with an accurate image of events that actually happened but were repressed.

We have known these things, and many other truths as well, without the aid of evidence or open public debate. We have been certain of them because... well... because they are things that everybody knows.

And ...yet... we have on occasion been mistaken.

This is why it is important that everybody has a voice and that we listen to one another carefully.

There is no single point of view or unifying theme expressed in these short autobiographical pieces.

We could not in good faith offer the men to whom we sent questionnaires the opportunity to speak their minds in one breath, only to tell them what they could and could not say with the next. So they have said many different things. They did not always agree with each other or with us.

There’s always a risk in providing someone his* voice. He might say things that we don’t want to hear. Occasionally, for example, we may be upset with what we hear the people in this book saying. Oddly, though, I think most people who take the trouble to hear these voices will be more surprised than offended. They may simply discover that “pedophiles” are not who they thought they were.

In fact, “pedophiles” are not a single type. Other than an attraction to minors that may be stronger than others have, they have no personality characteristics that would clearly distinguish them from any other cross-section of the population. They are neither more nor less loving, deceitful, cowardly, noble, empathic, sociopathic or anything else than we are – whoever “we” might be. Their unifying characteristic is, if you will, diversity.

A well-known corrupter of the youth was once condemned by his nation, largely for pointing out that the experts in his society did not know as much as they believed they did. The Delphic Oracle declared this condemned man to be the wisest person around. He did not know anything, but he knew that he didn’t know anything. And indeed, knowing that we are ignorant is the optimal point of departure for a serious inquiry into the nature of any aspect of reality. It is for that reason that I make a modest proposal: that we listen to the voices that this book makes available to us before, with our hearts full to overflowing with self-righteous hatred, we continue with the torture and truly genocidal destruction of a whole section of our population.

*I focus on men in this book, and use the male pronoun, because the segment of our population that is targeted for destruction here is overwhelmingly male. We would have welcomed submissions from women, and they would, of course, have also been included.

Is It Possible To Have A Worthwhile Life In Prison?

HD

This is my second time being caged. Though the first sentence was extravagant at nine years, at least I – and those who cared about me – could reasonably look forward to my rejoining the living again. While that didn't make my caged existence any less meaningless, it was a good reason to endure the meaninglessness. This time is different. Soon my appeals will be exhausted, and with them I'll lose not just my hope of ever getting to live again, but also the chance to attack and disrupt some of the cruel "laws" and procedures that cost me my life (and so much more), and thus my hope for helping other victims of this proudly stupid and vicious system to avoid some of the injustices and tortures I've suffered. When even that hope is gone, it will be a lot harder to justify enduring this unrelenting insult and injury any longer, which is why I say with deep sadness and shameful disloyalty to the optimistic and fun-loving kid I used to be: no. At least in my situation, no, it's generally not possible to live a worthwhile life in prison, not if the word "worthwhile" means anything . . . or "life" for that matter.

Some people insist a falling tree makes a sound whether anyone hears it or not. But what does it really mean, to "make a sound" in a universe with no organisms to perceive it? For that matter, what's a "universe" in the absence of any perception? Similarly, I asked: what's a life that no one knows of? Non-prisoners may occasionally think of prisoners – usually as memories or some other abstraction – but they rarely directly perceive them.

We scream; no one hears.

We cry; no one hears.

We write; no one reads.

We reach out; no one responds.

At some point it's not hard to feel like there's no difference whether we exist or not, and really, if I died right now, mid- paragraph, who would know? You sure wouldn't. My high school best friend wouldn't know either. Neither would my sister, my neighbor, nor my cat. Most would never even hear about it, so it truly wouldn't make the slightest ripple in their worlds – worlds I used to be an important part of. Even for the tiny handful of people who'd find out I died, it would change nothing in those

lives, either. Some short-lived obligatory sadness, perhaps, but the reality is, the loss of me is old news. I was lost to the real world long ago, and now if I fall, I just don't make a sound anymore.

So, what makes any life "worthwhile" then? In my nutshell opinion: it's joyful sharing and interaction. For instance, I love to laugh, or at least that's what I always thought. As it turns out though, after almost everyone I've ever cared about has shut me out (consciously or unconsciously), I'm realizing it was never the laughing I loved so much, but the *sharing* of laughter. Comedy isn't such a pleasure in a social, or more specifically, a *love* vacuum. Same for everything else – cool things are cool if there is someone you care about to share them with. It was always the caring social aspect, being happy *with* someone, that made me happy, and only happiness, one's own and others', makes life worthwhile.

Ask yourself: what would you practice if you were the last person on earth? So you can bowl a perfect game, or hit a hole in one, or write poetry, or do a back flip . . . who cares? And *that*, see, is my point: someone has to care for anything to matter, and prisoners – separated, isolated, degraded, caged, and largely forgotten – are mostly irrelevant in any practical sense to anyone outside their cages, in real life. So for me and for others who cannot bring themselves to care about anything inside the cage while forcibly separated from everything outside of it, nothing really matters because, truthfully, no one outside the cage really cares much, if at all. Prison is a whole other universe, and it's not and never can be *my* universe. I feel that life is worthwhile only when it is shared, and any meaningful sharing of my life is precisely what those these fucking, murderous, bedraggled thieves stole when they kidnapped and held me hostage with the expressed intent to never let me live in the real world again.

My Online Friend

DN

Here is a true story about my online relationship with a younger male, aged twelve or thirteen. I made sure he knew he could stop our relationship at any time. He never did. He was curious about his body and liked to show it to me. I never made any requests. It was up to him what he did. I gave him total control. I bought a lot of things online for him. But he never asked for anything high priced. I had extra money every month that I saved up for him to use. I bought the items and put them on his gaming account. I never pushed anything sexual on him. It was all his idea. He was clever, but we both stayed happy with one another for about a year. Then then we started to drift apart and later I found out it was because he had a girl friend. We enjoyed each other's online company until I put an end to our contact because the FBI took all my tech with a search warrant for possession and sharing of CP [Child Pornography] I got from online sites. I chose to end our relationship to keep him safe. I care about him still and will never forget him. He accepted me as I was, and when I told him about the CP he was worried for me. He told me to stop it and I did for a while. Then I started up again and now I'm in prison for distribution of CP. I spent a year in county and will spend about seven years in federal prison.

Like My Heart Was Ripped Out

AK

I grew up as a PK (pastor's kid). Life was pretty normal until we moved to El Paso Texas when I was twelve. I had been struggling with math in school, and a guy at my dad's church found out and volunteer to tutor me. For a while, he just got to know me and helped with my math. Eventually he started telling me I could concentrate on my school work better if I relaxed more, so he gave me neck massages. As he got the sense I was comfortable with the level of physical contact, he offered back massages, then eventually, full body massages with shorts on.

One day when he was house sitting for a friend, he invited me over. At some point in the evening he asked me if I had ever masturbated. I hadn't yet, so he offered to show me how. I watched him, and once he was done, he said I could go in the bathroom and try it. For some reason I couldn't seem to get the same results as him, so, embarrassed and frustrated, I went back to him and he helped me.

After that, I was hooked and then every chance I had when I was with him, he'd be all over me.

He volunteered with the scout troop I was in and we usually would end up in a tent together on camp-outs. I spent a lot of time at his house, naked most of the time. I don't remember exactly how old he was, but I guess somewhere in his early to mid 20s. Up until I met John, I didn't remember having any particular sexual preference, but after a while, I started noticing boys my own age a lot more, especially since I turned 14, and was on the high school wrestling team.

I never dated any girls until my senior year. Then, a 21 year old girl from church started pursuing me. We dated for a while, but it never got physical. Much of this time I spent with John is a blur, except for certain instances that stand out in my memory – like the first time he approached me sexually, and a few camp-outs where we shared a tent. I don't even remember how long my relationship with him lasted or how it ended. I imagine it was probably a couple of years, then I either got too old for him or he was afraid I would tell someone.

One vivid memory I have is when I was twelve or thirteen years old. A friend of mine from church, about my age asked me in my backyard "Does John give you back massages too"?

I just said “Yeah” and we never said anything more about it. I never had any other experiences with guys.

Once I graduated from high school, I joined the Navy and went into the nuclear power program. I spent six years in the Navy, four of which were on a submarine. I am amazed that after spending that much time in close quarters with nothing but men, I never acted on any of my urges.

After I got out of the navy, I got a job at a commercial nuclear power plant. This was around 1990, and the Internet was just starting to get big. As I was exploring on-line, I found that there were lots of men with experiences like mine, and I chatted with many who had similar interests.

About that time, in my mid-20s, I started volunteering with a youth mentoring program at the YMCA called “Y-uncles.” Over the next ten years or so I had several “Y-nephews”, most of them about ten to fifteen years old. I never had sexual contact with any of them, although if some of them had asked, I doubt I would've been able to resist. The closest I came was with Steve, who was about twelve. One day we were out fishing and he started asking questions about masturbation. He asked if I ever did it and when I said yes he wanted to know how to do it. I hesitated, then said "You don't expect me to show do you?"

I was kind of hoping he would say yes, but he said no, so I just I gave him some basic info on the mechanics of how it's done. It's probably better that he said no because a few months later he told me that his mom was mad at me for talking to him about it. I suspect he got caught by his mom and to deflect attention he told her "Kurt told me how to do it". At least he didn't say "Kurt showed me how to do it".

Actually, looking back I see that it may have been better in the long run for that to have happened. I might not have ended up as deep into everything and spending 30 years in prison, if I'd gotten into a little trouble early on.

Another close call was with Chris, who was about eleven or twelve. He was the son of my landlords. I was renting a room in their very nice large home in a beautiful wooded area. One day Chris came in from exploring out in the woods and we were alone because his mom and step-dad were not home from work yet. Chris came to me and said he needed help with getting a tick off of him. When I asked where it was he blushed and pointed to his crotch. I saved him further embarrassment by just having him pull down his shorts a little in the front so I could get the tick which had buried itself right in the middle of his pubic area. Fortunately there was no hair to deal with.

It was a good thing I didn't try to do anything, because one day I was joking around with him and threatened to yank his shorts down and he said "You wouldn't dare!" I reached to him and "panted" him there right in the kitchen. Fortunately his underwear stayed up, but he was really shocked and embarrassed. He ended up telling his mom and she told him that I was just being immature.

Back to Steve. One day we were playing poker for pennies and he (or maybe it was me, I don't remember) suggested that we play strip poker instead. We ended up including a friend of his from the neighborhood. We sat at my kitchen table which had a glass top. They insisted that I put a sheet over the table and I reluctantly agreed in order to get the game going. Eventually we all ended up naked and so I suggested that the next person to lose had to run around the house naked. I lost. As I rounded the corner back into the kitchen, Steve, who had my film camera, snapped a picture of me. He and his friend thought it was hilarious, but I wasn't happy because I had to waste a whole roll of film since we couldn't get it developed with the nude photo of me!

One of my favorite Y-nephews was Christopher. He was about twelve or thirteen when we were first matched. He was the oldest of three brothers who were all on the YMCA swim team. Their single mom was the team coach. Being able to hang out at swim meets and practices was a nice benefit to knowing them. Most of the boys on the swim team were not bashful about showering in the nude before and after practice, and the Y had a large open shower area. Besides being really cute and in great physical shape Christopher had a fun personality.

In my late twenties, I met Bob (now my co-defendant) on-line. We got to know each other via chat and eventually met in person and started seeing each other. After about six months or so of meeting at his place or mine or at a hotel we eventually moved in together. At some point, he was working as a school bus driver and got to know a co-worker who was a single mother with a nine-year-old son, Brett.

Brett started spending a lot of time with us since his mom wanted him to have positive male influence. I'm not sure how long it took, but at some point Brett started acting out. Like one time he told us that his mom told him he could be a stripper because he had a great body. He then proceeded to strip for us like a nine-year-old Chippendale! He would also want to cuddle and one day he asked us to tickle him. When we started to tickle his ribs he said "No, not like that. Down there".

He had obviously had had men do that for him before, because he knew what he wanted. Nine years old was much younger than I was really interested in, but neither Bob nor I could resist. Things progressed and at some point some digital pictures were taken of him that would be the main evidence against us in our criminal case.

Somewhere along the way, Bob and I became licensed foster parents. We had several different foster sons over a period of about five years. Jimmy was the one we cared for the longest. He was eight when he came to our home. He had severe emotional and behavioral problems. He had been bounced around to various family members because at age four he attacked his mom and she was afraid of him. He would lose control of himself and start screaming, throwing things, biting, kicking and swearing like a sailor.

Over the next four years we cared for him. He became much more stable, but it took many restraints, some unfortunately in public. One time I had to wrap him up and hold him in the front of the store in town and someone called the police because they thought I was assaulting him. When the police got there, Jimmy had calmed down and explained to them that I was helping him.

Eventually Jimmy got to to be known by the police in our small town because he would sometimes make 911 calls and hang up. So they came to our house and had a serious talk with him about calling 911 only for a real emergency. Little did we know at the time that the police would be there later for a much different reason. Our day happened because of a former foster son, Casper, who was thirteen. We had had him removed from our home because he attacked Jimmy who was much smaller than him, even though Casper was only about a year older. Casper was mad at us, so he told a therapist he was seeing that he had seen a few pictures of Brett and Jimmy in the hot tub – pictures which did not exist.

Of course by that point, there were thousands of underage porn pics and videos, but Casper didn't say anything about that. So he was obviously lying just to try and get back at us.

When Jimmy was taken by Child Protective Services at our raid, it felt like my heart was ripped out of my chest.

We had grown to love him like our own son over four years. We had invested so much of ourselves to help them and it was all destroyed because we had been living selfishly. I was hooked on porn and chatting with "teens" on-line. The "teens" may or may not have been who they said they were. I was constantly searching for someone to hook up with, and

over several years I did meet quite a few in person, some men and some teenagers.

I realize, after re-reading what I have written, that it would appear that I'm still attracted to that life I was leading. I can't deny that, at some level, the attraction and the interest are still there, but over the last ten years of incarceration, I have learned to manage them. For instance, there are some TV shows I no longer watch because I realize they can trigger old feelings. "Riverdale" is an example. I have an attraction to Archie whose actually nineteen, but plays a fifteen-year-old and has had several shirtless scenes. Also, young Bruce Aaron "Gotham" even though he's never shirtless.

I believe that if I were to be released today, I would be strong enough to keep from re-offending. Unfortunately, I still have about sixteen years left unless they bring back parole or good-time changes.

Before The Rabbit Hole

FB

In the early 2000's, my skills of running a pornography server were gaining momentum. Child pornography was being traded around on the various types of servers (FTP, newsgroups, peer to peer, and instant messaging etc.) like wildfire.

As all of these things were going on behind the scenes; my life on the outside in public view seemed just as normal as everyone else's. In fact, even more "normal" than most in the neighborhood in which I lived.

I lived on a street that had rows of townhouses on each side. Mine was kept up the nicest. It wasn't much, but in the year 2000, it was all I could afford. I really wanted a detached home out in the suburbs, but the real estate agent did the best she could for me, and even with a VA loan, all I could get for myself, without overextending myself, was a townhouse. I'm going into detail over this all for a specific reason which will be explained and understood later.

I was quite demoralized over the fact that this was all I could afford. Living in a crowded neighborhood was not what I was looking for. My real estate lady said I was "lucky" because a lot of people couldn't even afford that. Even though everything in life can be looked at in relative terms, I viewed my situation as not that great.

Even so, I bought the house and made a bunch of improvements to it over time. It was okay for what it was. I got to know the neighbors well. Most of them, I learned in time, were dysfunctional. Many were poor, divorced, unemployed, or illegal. Ironically, as it turned out, I was one of the more economically stable and sound people there.

It seemed that most of the fathers of the children in the neighborhood were temporarily and/or permanently absent, imprisoned, or deadbeat stepfathers who themselves had children of their own in other states. In my entire time of living there, (2000 – 2010) I knew only one man that was somewhat present as a father to his kids. This man, named Walter, was single with no kids for the first seven years while I was there. In the year 2007 he hooked up with this lady who was divorced, with a son – a nine-year-old named Austin.

After all the years of living next to me, Walter knew me very well,. He came over to visit often. Now he began to bring Austin over with him as well. Over time, Austin started to come in my house, without Walter. This

was probably because of hearing my computer games going on all the time, as I was playing downstairs in the kitchen.

I was/am an avid gamer. My knowledge for audio/video/computer electronics surpassed anyone I knew at that time. My whole house was wired throughout and everything was connected to everything. In addition, in the past, I had worked as a cable technician, and LAN cable installer. I could run, test and make whatever cables I wanted, and do it right. By 2007, I had a 1000 base – T (gigabyte LAN), something that was unheard of at that time. My kitchen became a makeshift control room, with four computers in a circle, surround-sound in every room, and each computer with its own sub-sound system. Some of my older friends would come over and we would have submarine simulator or flight jet simulator combat games, all the same time. Also, I acquired a game list selection of hundreds of games. All my games I could load from digital disc images on my hard-drives. I never had to pay for most games, as I knew how to hack and crack most if not all games. (It's easy to do).

To make a long story shorter, I had a lot of technology. It all ran fast and flawless. I started to customize my own computer cases (to displace heat) even before the computer case manufacturers did!

My house was like a high-tech arcade, but better. The gaming experience was my childhood dream come true. And at that time, in the year 2006, advances in computer technology were just beginning to make my dreams possible.

Austin saw me playing Counterstrike a few times, and came over to check it out. Walter, his stepfather, asked me if it was okay for him to stay over at my place. I thought, "Sure why not, it's not a big deal." By the summer of 2007, I regularly had two computers set up in the kitchen, one for Austin and the other in case I wanted to join in on the fun. Sometimes Austin would play for hours by himself while I would do my own thing upstairs in my bedroom where my main super computer was and my server computer was as well. My server computer was almost always running at this point, automatically downloading and uploading child pornography files with very minimal time or effort required from me.

My server host name was "MX–MONI–FUN–And–GAMES. MX stands for Win-Max; MONI stands for monitor; and Fun and Games was all I was about. It's how I rolled.

By 2008, Austin was 11 years old. He reminded me of me when I was his age. Caucasian, skinny, brown hair and really playful with lots of energy.

Actually tons of energy – ping-pong off the walls energy – and he was super hot!

After Austin got tired of playing games downstairs, he would come up to my bedroom, and jump on my California King-size water-bed. He loved it. What kid doesn't? And I'm a big kid just like him, except older. But with me being alone with him in my bedroom on my water-bed, thoughts began to race through my mind. This was the beginning of what I call me being tested. Even though I knew what I liked, and my computer server running right next to us, I kept my composure, and remained in complete control of my actions. I thought, "I've passed the test, I'm good." But what I didn't know yet was that this was only the beginning. The real tests were yet to come. I had no idea how crazy it was going to get.

Letting Austin over to play computer games was the first domino to fall. In the springtime of 2008, Austin began to bring over Tyler – a beautiful, blond haired, blue-eyed five year old, who wanted to join in on the fun of playing computer games. I thought, "Mom, I can't say no because I love to see the kids happy and having fun." Also, I wanted them to enjoy the childhood that I would have wished for myself.

Austin and Tyler played games together for hours. I began to teach them how to use various programs, games and how to boot to various operating systems. All of my computers had multiple operating systems for specifically tailored optimum performance depending on the game being used.

Sometimes when Austin wasn't over, Tyler would come over by himself. Then, he would want to come upstairs and into my bedroom. He loved the water-bed and these magnetic darts I had. He would throw at the magnetic board I had hanging from my sleeping-bag-covered-windows. I usually like to block out all the light, as I love the dark, and I stayed up late at night and slept late.

Were there times I thought of the children in sexual ways? For me to say no would be lying. I did have sexual thoughts, but I kept them at the back of my mind. I was trying to figure out things. I could separate my sexual interest with children by keeping it confined to viewing pornography. I wanted to respect and follow society's laws the best that I could. Above all else, I wanted to respect the children, and their parent's wishes. I am an honorable person, and always will be honest first before anything else. Even though society doesn't view me that way now, the honest truth is I would protect children from harm even if it meant harm to myself.

That's what I began to find out. I never had children of my own, but now, through this experience of being around kids, I discovered that I loved them. I think I can make a special connection with children because the kids know I like them. They can sense that with me, so they tend to gravitate toward me.

At no time were the children able to access the pornography I had, as it was hidden and not accessible.

At some point, Tyler started to bring his cousin "RJ" over, who was four years old. I think RJ was mixed/Hispanic. He was a beautiful kid, and was very intelligent, courageous, and outgoing at only four years old! A really wonderful kid.

It wasn't long before Tyler was teaching RJ everything he knew about my computers. It was really cute and fascinating to see Tyler, who was barely 5 years old, show RJ games, configurations and how to boot into other operating systems. And RJ actually began to learn everything Tyler knew. I was amazed at the speed at which they learned.

Eventually another kid from down the street started to come over. His name was Derek. He was a nine-year-old white kid. I could tell he had a little German in him. And then a 14-year-old kid, Demetri, who was half-white and half-black. So many kids were over at my house at any given time, it was beginning to look like the old early 80's show "Romper Room."

By October 2008, after being laid off from Adell Plastics, at first I was a bit depressed, but quickly decided this could be the extended vacation I'd been looking for. As the economy crashed and burned over the financial crisis, I decided to go into chill-out mode. After all, I was prepared for it. Years earlier, I had warned about the financial collapse that would ensue due to a housing crash as early as 2003. Usually I was met with skepticism, criticism and sometimes laughter. Now that all I had warned others about was coming to pass in a big way, it was time for me to take the low road for a while, and let everyone else stress out over it.

After I determined that my most recent job layoff was a godsend, not a setback, I continued to focus on business as usual, without the pesky time-consuming all encompassing job career thing to worry about.

I felt like one of those people on that Carnival cruise ship when the ship I saw on the news. It became immobile, the toilet stopped working, the food got tainted and everyone was puking and shitting everywhere. Disease started to spread but they couldn't get off the ship, and even when they reached land. When they finally were able to get off that ship, that's how I

felt when fall of 2008 came. Yeah, that's how I felt. Liberated from being brainwashed – from the rat race – from the ocean of lies. The "21st century American dream" (a phrase coined by George W Bush in 2004) wasn't for me.

Every Halloween, I would I would use elaborate lighting, audio, fog effects to turn the front of my house into a graveyard. I made myself into a vampire, and the part fit me perfectly. Even my ex-girlfriend was part of that one year, and she did a great job making herself up. People were impressed. Every year, the crowd of "trick or treaters" got larger and larger. I would buy hundreds of dollars worth of the best chocolate candy and give it out, after scaring the hell out of people, especially the kids. A few of the younger ones actually cried, and that always made me feel bad so I would comfort them afterwards and give them extra candy. (Everything I do for the common good, is "grooming.")

When I was a kid, Halloween was one of my most favorite holidays. I wanted children to enjoy it like I did. Besides, the imagination of people, especially childrens' imagination is of crucial importance for the future of progress. Stimulating imagination to me it is so important, because it opens up minds to the possibilities of what can be made real, without limitations. Open-mindedness is the key to everything. My 2008 Halloween went flawlessly. After trick or treating time ended around 10 PM, I had pizza delivered for me, my brother, my older friends, and their kids.

My house was party central at times. Walls lined with 55 gallon fish bowls, king-sized water-beds, big screen TV and computer monitors, and sodas, snacks, pizza etc. throughout the house made it kid heaven. Arcades and Chucky Cheese had nothing on me. But all of these things weren't being used by me to lure kids into my house, even though that's what happened. These were all things that I love, and the children loved what I love. And they loved me.

As 2008-2009 continued I was sporadically looking for work half-heartedly. I had no expectations of working, as more and more of America's population became unemployed. 500,000 people a month lost their jobs, and I wasn't in a hurry to jump into an even shittier job than the ones I'd had before. (This is usually what happens when people are desperate for work).

When I did work in the past, I made between 17 and 21 dollars an hour. I knew how to manage money very well, and would save large amounts of money quickly. Being single most of the time, and my brother's living

with me, paying a good portion of the bills facilitated my success in saving money. My brother did very well at the same time.

Every day was an off day. I'd stay up until five or six in the a.m., playing video games and masturbating to the porn on my server computer. Then I would sleep alone on a king-size water-bed until around 1- 2 PM. It was like sleeping on a cloud.

I would wake up with kids beating at my front door to get in. The kids would hang out at my door for hours waiting for me to wake up and let them in. This happened almost every day. When I opened the door in the beginning, they were respectful, asking to be let in. But after a while, they knew they never had to ask. I always loved having them over and would immediately accommodate them in any way. So after a while, as soon as I opened the door they would burst right in.

It became normal for Tyler, Derek and Demetri to be over almost every day. Then Dante (a black nine-year-old boy), a five-year-old girl (whose name I can't remember) and her brother from next door started to be regulars as well. And then this five year old boy, Kevin (white kid) who was a real hottie started showing up. Dimitri started getting his friend Kyle (white boy 14 years old) to show up.

A lot of times I'd be fixing the kids breakfast, lunch and/or dinner when they weren't eating at their own house. I had a digitally-controlled fryer, a griddle, crock-pots and other kitchenware devices. Oh yeah, I also had a hot-dog toaster. It was specifically designed to cook hot-dogs and hot-dog buns better than a grill, but worked just like a toaster. While the kids played games, browsed the Internet and whatever else within the circle of computers, I fixed up bacon, eggs, waffles, pizza bites, hamburgers, onion rings, tater tots and fries. The kids loved my food better than anywhere. They loved eating at my place and eventually I just started feeding them regularly, and they always had snacks I'd made available.

I couldn't help having an environment where kids could thrive, have fun and just be themselves. I was/am a big kid myself. Part of that was because of the strictly controlled environment I lived in as a child growing up. I wanted to live free and be myself. Now I had provided that environment for myself, and was especially happy to provide it for the children as well.

It was the result of seeing the daily realities of life that part part of me never "grew up" . Economic upward mobility was already on the way in the early 2000's. I was not happy with the treatment I received in the workplace or with my future economic prospects. Quite simply put, I was

sold a bill of lies by my parents and society (the government). I was told that if I just worked hard and "did what I was told, no matter what" (actual quote from one of my mom's recent letters) that I would get what I wanted in life. "That's what everyone else had to do." Nonsense. What I actually found out through real life experience, was that the "American dream" was dying more and more every day for those who work for a living. The ones who had an independent brain and could think for themselves, were beginning to realize that fact more every day.

People like my super-intelligent hacker friend Mike, and a lot of the neighborhood folk (especially the men) got it. And the response (a subtle act of rebellion) was to "check out" from "normal" society and make a truly free life for themselves with rewards now, not lies and promises.

As time went on, and more and more kids were showing up at my house, I began to wonder, "is this going to look a little suspicious?" I didn't have too much time to ponder that question when Tyler's mom's started to want me to babysit and help him with his homework. She started to pay me for it and I couldn't refuse. I couldn't refuse not because I wanted the money. I loved helping take care of the kids for free. I couldn't act like I wanted to be with the kids that much for nothing, or else it really would have looked suspicious. So I agreed to get paid, but I told them I would use the money to pay for food, soda and whatever else for the kids. She said okay.

Even after Austin and his parents moved to Manchester – 10 miles away – he would get them to drive him over to my house and drop him off.

Often the kids would not want to leave with their parents. Sometimes they would go kicking and screaming. I would always tell the kids to be respectful to their parents and to do what they wished. And they did. The children know instinctively that I cared for them, and respected them as equals. Actually, I look at children as if they are gods, and they know that somehow, but also know to listen to me and do as I say because I want no harm to come to them, so getting them to do things was easy. I never had to be mean or nasty to them to get them to be responsible. They simply followed my example. One parent said to me, "How do you do it, without losing your mind"

I said, "For me it's easy. The kids love me but also respect me."

As for the "losing my mind" comment, I suppose most adults get annoyed or irritated around children and what they do before too long. But I felt completely at peace. Being with the kids and participating in all that they did made me feel at home, and with my own kind. I can say that now, but I would have never said that publicly or to any of the parents then. I think

that would have said to them inadvertently "I am a pedophile" in bold, bright, flashing letters nine miles high. So I couldn't be too happy about the kids being over all the time, at least publicly.

At this point 2008-2009, I was really understanding about why people wanted to have children, and all the feelings of wanting to love and protect them. I never had children of my own, but their children were like my very own children. I would do anything for them. Even though the Feds and the SOMP "treatment program" would say I was grooming the children for eventual sexual activity, this was not the case. Yes, I had sexual thoughts or fantasies at times about these kids. However, the main purpose of all that I did for them was that I wanted the kids to have fun, and I had fun watching them have fun.

It was April 2009. Dimitri, Derek, Tyler and Kyle were visiting religiously every day. Sometimes though during the evenings or weekends, there were up to 10 kids in my house (mostly boys and one girl) wrestling, chasing each other around, playing with the fish in my fish tanks, playing video games or jumping around on my water-bed upstairs.

Austin, the 11-year-old, started to bring over his own USB MSN Web-Cam. He would make YouTube videos of himself. The Web-Cam had an excellent hands-free microphone. So I bought some MSN cams myself. The kids liked me taking videos of them wrestling. The Feds would later say I did this for sexual reasons.

Yes, the kids really liked wrestling and playing around on the water-bed. A lot of times they would want me to get on the water-bed and they would all pile on me and wrestle around with each other. There were a few times when RJ and Tyler wrestled on the bed and things were getting a little too intimate as far as them wanting to touch me. I pushed them away nicely when that happened. I knew where my limits were, and I wasn't going to let the wrestling progress to something else. Regardless of what the kids wanted, society doesn't sanction adults having sexual activities with children, and I knew that. I also knew that once the Feds would catch up with me (it was not a matter of "if" but "when" with my child-porn-server), that I didn't want to spend any more time in prison than what I was going to receive already.

There were many times I felt highly tested. One time, two of the boys were playing around with each other and somehow got partially naked and chased each other around the house. I had to stop that, even though I didn't want to. One time after trying to get the five-year-old girl to leave and go back home she refused and had to be chased around the house. When Dymitri and I cornered her standing on the coffee table, she pulled her

panties down to her ankles. Luckily Dymitri took care of that and not me. I probably would have handled it okay, but I would've felt like I was going through the fires of Hades during the good thing and nothing else. Then there was the time it was just Tyler, Patrick, and me on my water-bed and they wanted me to close the door and turn out the lights so they could see my glow in the dark solar system all hanging and on the ceiling/walls.

My ex-girlfriend, Jamie, had bought me a glow-in-the-dark solar system including hundreds of stars. It worked well with the adjustable 500-watt halogen-inverted light stand I had on top of the waterbed headboard. I set it up in 2005 and loved it. So did the kids. I also had lava lamps and other miscellaneous gadgets. There were many times the kids wanted to close my bedroom door and turn out the lights. I thought, "What would people think about me in my bedroom with a bunch of kids on my bed with the door closed and lights off?" The whole thing was bizarre, but I loved it. I never imagined any of it, except maybe in my private fantasies when I was looking at stuff on my porn-server. Maybe. It was so hard to believe that this was all happening, but I loved it.

There were many times I had to tell the others logged onto my porn-server that I had to shut the computer down because there were many kids over at my house that needed the computers for games. This usually resulted in the main lobby lighting up with comments like "Are you serious?!", "WTF," and all kinds of questions. I just told them, "Look, the kids want to have fun, I got to go, see you".

One day, while the usual crowd of kids (all boys) were playing computer games in the kitchen (control room) there was a knock on the door. I opened the door, and three girls, between the ages of seven and nine, were standing there. They were all very cute and very nice. They asked if they could come in and see the "solar system" and stars I had hanging up.

I always wanted to treat all people equally and with respect. Same goes with how I treated boys versus girls. However, girls being the opposite sex of boys, I know they are different in many ways. That in itself excites me, and proves to be another element that (for me anyway) doesn't exist with me being around the boys. Being with the boys can be just doing what other boys do. Girls? Not so much. I can't seem to relate to girls so much, except that I find them very sexually attractive.

And here they were. Wanting to enjoy the same things the other kids had seen and done. I reluctantly said yes to them, and they all followed me, went into my bedroom and sat down taking various positions on my water-bed. They asked me to close the door and turn off the lights, which I did. They were fascinated by it all. I was fascinated by them, even though I

tried not to show it. When I turned the lights back on, I saw three wonderfully beautiful girls sitting there looking at me. My heart was racing and I very nicely told them that they should leave and go play with the other girls in the neighborhood. Which they all very sweetly did.

If all of that doesn't sound crazy enough, given my sexual inclinations and circumstances, with watching boys wrestle on my water-bed, playing around with each other, and taking videos/pictures of themselves (no one nude), it could have gotten worse. Or better, depending on how you look at it.

A lot of kids started to ask me if they could spend the night. That's where I drew the line. Even though I would've loved it, I don't know if my willpower could have sustained itself through that kind of rodeo. And I wasn't going to find out either. If I had said yes to the kids spending overnight stays at my place with the parent's permission, I could've turned the 20 years (absurd) they wanted to send me to prison, easily into hundreds of years (ludicrous) instead.

During this entire time, I had picture and video cameras of many types (camcorders, digital cameras on tripods, the newest Web-cams and computers with T cards) that were always ready for use. I was very fortunate, legally speaking, to have not progressed to taking pictures/videos of the children naked or otherwise. I had the technology, access and wherewithal to make it happen easily. And, most importantly, it would've happened willingly – without force, abuse and or coercion of any kind. Those who say child pornography happens only by the result of force or abuse are mistaken. It is not always the case. In fact, cases involving force are in the minority.

During recent years children have been taking pictures and/or videos of themselves naked or acting out in sexual ways. The response from the authorities is one of condemnation and demagoguery. They threaten the children with legal sanctions, and parents with prison time if they do not "cooperate" with the investigative units and "treatment" (re-education camps). Who are the real victimizers here? I mean yeah, children can be sexually victimized, but what happens if the sexual pictures being taken of them are being taken by the children themselves? Do the children then become a victim of themselves? According to the authorities and treatment programs, they become exactly that. Children who initiate sexual actions voluntarily and willingly should not be marginalized and oppressed for doing so. Yet they are treated like they themselves are the victimizers by the deployment of Gestapo tactics like this. Such practices deserve more careful scrutiny. Is this all about protecting the children? Or, is it about

something else? In my opinion, based on what I've seen thus far, this is nothing short of a crusade. And that is why I feel so compelled to bear witness to what I see going on around me. I have a responsibility to have regard for all people who have been unjustly persecuted for any reason.

So here I was in the summertime of the year 2009. Dimitri, Kyle, Patrick and Tyler were coming over every day and were there from the time I woke up until late at night. They were living with me more than with their parents. I was babysitting Tyler and helping him with his homework, which he enjoyed doing with me and he learned very quickly with me helping him. He loved me teaching him. The lady who lived next to me said that I had become "Mother Goose." There were kids running in and out of my house constantly.

One time, Tyler's dad – just recently released from prison – came over to see what his son was doing over at my place. Parents knew I had an open door policy which meant they could come over and in my house at any time unannounced to see how their kids were doing, or just visit. Tony was his name. Tyler jumped on Tony's lap and was excited to show his dad everything he had learned. Tony was in shock to see his only six-year-old son fly through computer screens and operating systems as if it were nothing at all. He was pleased, but gave me a look of bewilderment as if to say "How did you do this?" I just smiled and said to him, "He's learned a lot, hasn't he?" What I hadn't understood in the beginning, but had figured out by now, is that these kids – especially for the boys – were starving for a father figure in their life. And I was it.

For decades, men – especially fathers – have been dropping out of the system because of social and economic pressures, that, like me, they found unmanageable. The result was that fathers have been largely becoming absent. I don't blame them. But, for the children of those fathers, it has been a social and ethical disaster. I ended up in a neighborhood of young families just struggling to get by, and this was was "ground zero" as a place to witness the destruction of men and families. No one could see that more clearly than me .

Aggressive government-backed social and economic policies aimed at making men the real losers in the system had produced real consequences. I could see them all around me. I was staring at the future of America. Most people were oblivious to it. At the time, the "baby boomers," who were the largest group in population, were living very often isolated in big homes on large plots of land, or living in gated communities. The older generations refused to see the reality for what it was. It was a truth they could ignore since "they got theirs" and they sure as hell didn't want to

jeopardize their lifestyle by upsetting the apple cart. This apple-cart would not begin to be upset until the election year 2016, a time when "baby bloomers" started to decline in numbers relative to "X-generation" in addition to "millennial's."

Fathers of young families were increasingly being incarcerated or unemployed, or they were living with their parents due to the social and economic hardships. By late October 2009, the 2008 financial crisis was over, but the aftermath was just beginning. As I was still "unemployed," but not really looking for a job (on purpose) I had much time to spend having fun with the kids.

There were times I did have places to go, and things to do. I felt bad shutting things down for the kids, as they would have to go home or somewhere else until I came back. So, I started to leave the older kids in charge. Kyle and Dymitri were 14 years old. All of the kids knew what I expected from them. I showed them where the snacks and sodas were, and how to call me if they needed to. My brother and I would take off, leaving the two 14-year-olds in charge. Sometimes I would leave for four hours or more. When I came back, I would go inside and walk into the kitchen where they would all be. It was quiet, orderly, and relatively clean with no trash lying around. It was as though I had never left.

Something that their parents would have thought would have been impossible, I made happen with no effort at all. Their children were orderly, responsible and showed initiative when they had a respected leader. I saw what was missing in these kids lives.

Tyler's mom was having me more and more involved in Tyler's life. She could tell I was having a profound effect on him, and I think she was secretly trying to find a real father for her kids. Tony was an ex-con, and an alcoholic, and they would get into yelling matches and sometimes physical fights in front of Tyler. That made me really feel bad for Tyler. I would comfort him during these times.

I always empowered the kids, especially the boys. I once told Tyler, when I noticed the girls would distract him and play their girl mind-games, that he didn't have to let girls keep him from doing what made him happy. Tyler was an angel and he deserved the best of everything.

As October 31, 2009 approached, I had plenty of time to prepare for Halloween. I was able to set up the best Halloween since the first time I started doing it in the year 2001. Mobs of people showed up and I thought they might need the cops to direct traffic. People took pictures as crowds came and left.

I had a blast. So did the kids. After 10:00, I ordered pizza for everybody and the kids stayed late. I refused to let any of them spend the night even though some wanted to.

This was my life from October 2008 until January 20, 2010. That's the day the feds came knocking very loudly at my door. Until this day arrived, life was full of excitement, fun, and endless possibilities. Afterwards, it was like tumbling down the rabbit hole in the Alice in Wonderland story. Even now I am still tumbling down the rabbit hole; it's just that I've gotten used to it, and I am no longer afraid of the unknown. I've come to terms with it, and accepted it.

January 19/20th, 2010 was like any other day. I say January 19 to the 20th because a typical day for me, ran into the next morning. My brother and I had just finished talking, and playing games in my kitchen control room. He left to go back home around four to 4:30 AM. All was good. Then I took two of my computers upstairs to my bedroom as usual.

I was sitting at the station when at 6:00 AM sharp I heard a loud knock at the door. "FBI! Open the door!"

Now, I've seen this stuff on movies and TV shows before, and I know how the protocol went. I figured I had about 30 seconds max to open that door before they busted it down. So, I quite promptly told the man I was chatting with that I had to go now, and I hit the kill switch on my routers and switches. I jumped out of bed, ran downstairs and got ready, psychologically speaking, before I opened the door. As I opened the door I saw many beams of light streaming into my face and then I calmly said, "hey guys, what took you so long?"

Around seven or eight people dressed in black all had their guns drawn and pointing at me. They screamed "Turn around and put your hands on your head," with which I complied peacefully. As five people not any older than their early twenties rummaged through my house, the lead FBI agent and her partner FBI forensic psychologist prepared to interrogate me. The lead agent asked me a series of questions as we were sitting in my living room. I was nice and cooperative, as I knew this day would come, and just answered their questions honestly. I wasn't trying to hide anything, as they had all they needed on me. They showed me my giga tribe account and some chat logs. They knew what they were looking for and they found it. "It" was my porn-server and the person running it.

One of the questions the lead agent asked me was why the parents of the kids coming over to my house were allowing their children to be there given that I had no kids of my own? I told them that I was a trusted

member of the community and this happened as a result of my my actions as a resident in the neighborhood for ten years. They still seemed perplexed by my response. "This still doesn't explain why so many children were over at your house for such an extended period of time," they said. "You need to tell us why you made this happen."

"Me?" I said. "You say I am the one responsible for so many kids over at my house all the time? You and your bosses created an environment where fathers/men have a lot of incentive to be absent from their children's lives. Most of these kids come from broken and dysfunctional homes, all of which is a product of your own failed policies, and you want to blame me for why the children wanted to be here?"

I told them that they were asking the wrong person for the answer to that question as I was only a real friend who acted like a father to the children who came to my house. I also told them I loved kids and would prevent any harm to them, even if it meant harm to myself. They had looks of suspicion and disgust at me as I told them this.

They didn't care about my explanation. They interpreted what I was doing was inappropriate given my background and circumstances, and claimed that I was "grooming" the children for sexual activity. In other words, if the children were happy and well taken care of, it didn't matter. I still had "bad" intentions. It was like just because I thought about it, it was the same as if I had done it.

They thought they had found the crown jewel of child pornography. But the reality was, I was nothing. I was merely one of the larger players of the child pornography community. They had no idea of the immense scope and size of what existed. I was only the tip of the iceberg. Many years later, they would find this out.

After the FBI ransacked my house, we talked about my fish and my fish bowls and then they left. My brother and I bought laptops and got back on-line. I immediately acquired attorneys from California and then prepared for the hammer to drop on me.

One day, the kids all showed up again. They knew something had happened. They were all crowded around and that's when I told him a few things. I told him that I was sorry that our days of fun were over, and that I would probably be going away for a long time, and that I might never see them again. When they asked me, why, I told them that, it was because of things that they would not understand until they got older, but that I did care greatly about them and I would miss them. I hugged them all, and

cried a bit. Before they left, I told them that I would be giving them a bunch of my stuff as the days went on. Then we all left each other.

A lot of neighbors were still supportive of me even though they sort of knew what was up. They knew because basically I told them. Some had asked me personally if I had done anything sexual with their kids, and I told them no, which was the truth. They still let me be around their kids because they did not see me as a threat to their children in any way. The Feds and the media would change this in the coming months.

I was facing a period of house arrest, followed by a nine year prison sentence.

THE SHOWER

Jay Edson

I am about eight or nine years old, in Peoria:

The basement is divided into two parts with a doorway between them. To my right as I come down the stairs I see Mom's washing machine and dryer. At the other end of this part of the basement there is a little room that is perhaps four feet by four feet, with cement walls. My father installed a shower there, because we have no shower upstairs. It's a bit primitive, but it works.

I recall taking a shower with my father:

I feel a little self-conscious, but I am fascinated by his hairiness and am excited to be naked with him.

At times my parents wanted me to shower down there by myself:

I take my clothes off outside the shower and look into the other section of the basement. I can see out a window there. I think it is possible that neighbors—maybe even girls—might be out there trying to catch a glimpse of me. They might see my penis.

I recall finding something terrible in the more distant section of the cellar:

In this part of the cellar there is a shelf formed by the walls of the foundation of the house. I am rummaging through some of the junk that is stored on this shelf. I find some pictures that my dad has stored down there. As I examine them, I see something that horrifies me. It's a picture of a gnarled tree. Hanging from the tree are three dead men. One has had his arms and head severed from his body. His arms are hanging from the tree and his head is impaled on an upright limb. I know that this picture belongs to my father. I cannot understand why he would have such a picture. I cannot believe that people ever did such things as this picture portrays.

I am about the age when I went down in the cellar to find that terrible drawing. I am having a nightmare:

I see a blimp-like airplane falling out of the sky into the empty lot next to our house. Then I see it shrivel down into something very small. I think that the pilot may be injured or even dead, and I am worried about him. I go out into the empty lot and I search

through the grass for the shriveled remains of this airplane. Then I see it, and can see the pilot. He seems to be injured, but not yet dead. I want to help him but he takes a hold of one of my testicles and begins to pinch it. It hurts terribly.

At another time, when I was about the same age, I remember looking through a bunch of pulp mysteries that my mother stored on the bottom two shelves of bookcases we had in the living room:

I am pulling small stacks of them out of the shelf, and looking at the covers of these books. I see pictures of skulls, bloody hearts, daggers dripping with blood, people with knives stuck in them, and the like. With a combination of horror and fascination I study these various book covers. I am trying to understand why my mother would want to read about the kinds of things that are portrayed on these covers.

These memories of pictures associated with my father and my mother left me with three questions. Do these pictures represent things that people actually do to other people? Why would they do such things? Why would my parents have such interests? I now know that, yes, people really do things like that. The other two questions I still wonder about.

I have learned a lot since I discovered that picture in the cellar. Much later in my life I recognized a Goya print as being the one that my father had. While I still have no firm conclusions about why people do such things, and why my parents had these interests, I do have some tentative speculations. I think that for my father, it was his way of meditating on the same questions that puzzle me. He also was horrified. And then perhaps it became too much to meditate on, so he put the picture down in the cellar. And the pulp mysteries that my mother collected and read? She was a very civilized and decent human being. Why would she have an interest in such ugly things? When I first saw them, I don't think I had reading skills that were sufficient to actually read one of these mysteries.

I recall a time that must have been a few years later:

The novels are still there on the bottom shelf. I pick one up and I begin to read it. It's a Mickey Spillane novel. Its full of violence and craziness. I come away from it more puzzled than ever.

I've read a lot since then. I read Kessler's "Reflections On Hanging". Descriptions of the Holocaust. A book on the genocides of the 20th century. Foucault's "Discipline and Punishment." A lot of Freud. Still my questions are not answered. The obvious answer as to why we do such

things to each other is, of course, that we are killer apes. It's our nature to be violent. Only severe super-ego figures can keep the lid on. Only by violence can violence be checked. In our heart of hearts we are Id, and Id is treacherous, ruthless and bloodthirsty. Perhaps. But if so, what is there to hope for? If the most we can do is to protect ourselves from our innermost natures, will it be such a tragedy if our species destroys itself?

A few days ago I saw the picture of an Afghan girl of maybe seven or eight:

I cannot see her face clearly -- just her arms and her dress. She is dead. One of our drones. Remarkable feats those things perform. Technology is amazing. No need to put American boys and girls at risk. Collateral damage of course. Too bad, but.... but... well, you know. Too bad. Collateral damage coll... ateral damage colla... teral damage col... damage collateral dam... I try to soothe her with these words to wipe her forehead with them but I can't see it very well collateral damage please collateral damage but she won't be soothed.

I am sitting in a barber's chair in Peoria:

I am so short that the barber has to put a board across the arms of the chair for me to sit on. I love having the barber mess with my hair. A tingly feeling comes over my whole body. It is almost an ecstasy.

My father is cutting my hair:

He has gotten rid of those old hand clippers that kept pulling my hair when he cut it. Now he has a new electric set. It feels very good -- like when the professional barber does it. My father has me sit in a tall chair so that he can reach my hair easily. The same tingly feeling pulses through my body -- like a gentle current of happy electricity. Then, as he moves around me to do my sides, my front and my back, he brushes up against me. I can feel his penis through his pants and my shirt. It frightens me a little bit.

I go into a barbershop in Indianapolis:

I hope the barber will not put a board across the arms of the chair to prop me up. I am small for my age, but I am in the seventh grade. It would be embarrassing. He has me sit in the chair just like an adult would. I like the feeling of the haircut. Then he squares off my side-burns with a straight razor. I feel very proud. That must mean that I am getting older, even though I have no hint

of any facial or body hair yet.

But what if the super-ego is the cause of our violence, rather than its solution? I'm reading a book now called the "History of Corporal Punishment." It's by George Ryley Scott. It's not a great book. He doesn't seem to know much about anthropology. His image of hunting-gathering societies is uninformed at best. But he offers a lot of information about the sadomasochistic practices of punishment through the ages. His thesis seems to be that it is specifically sexual repression that creates the sadistic impulse. Certainly this seems to be the case in many situations. I quote from the back cover of the book:

The renunciation of sex by those joining holy orders ensured its inevitable return in another form. The beating of the penitent nuns and monks of cloistered sects—often before bishops and aristocrats—established a powerful link between sexuality and corporal punishment.

In front of bishops and aristocrats, yes. Are economic exploitation and sexual repression the warp and woof of a single fabric, the fabric of war? The Germans stripped Bonhoffer naked before hanging him. Can one generalize from this to say that our whole society is built upon sadomasochistic dynamics—that we are programed, every one of us, to love the one who represses us? Could we even go so far as to suggest that in the innermost core of who we are, we want nothing more than to love and be loved, and to express this in physical as well as emotional and verbal ways? From Mark Russel's blog we read:

As the nation reels from the latest war atrocity, articles like "Robert Bales, Afghan Killing Suspect, Plagued by Money And Job Strife" attempt to explain why on March 11, 2012, 17 Afghanistan civilians, nine of whom were children, were allegedly murdered in the sanctity of their homes by U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Robert Bales, a decorated 38-year-old, married father of two young children with 10 years of honorable service

Job Strife. Hmmm. Or could it have been deep-rooted problems in his love life? It's an interesting thought. In some ways it's a frightening thought. But it would it really have been so terrible had my father picked me up, and held me close, and kissed me while we were showering together?

Mr. Silver

IW

When I was twelve-years-old my parents owned a camp on a lake. At that point in time, young people actually had a say in their lives. Because I was somewhat responsible, my parents trusted me to at least try to make the right choices, and I had a lot of freedom.

Mr. Nickel bought the camp next to ours. He and his wife fit right in. I didn't know the term back then, but they were old hippies before there were old hippies. He was a retired professor from a university in the southern part of the state where we lived. Mrs. Nickel doted on me like a grandmother would. One funny thing is that I remember her first name, which was Bernetta, yet Mr. Nickel was always Mr. Nickel. It wasn't pretentious or anything. He was a teacher and I the student. Despite his small frame he just seemed a bit bigger than a lot of men.

I was raised on that lake and, at twelve years old, I thought I knew all there was to know about catching fish. Mr. Nickel opened a whole new world for me that summer. Fishing was about science, math, atmospheric conditions and adaptation. I was a well-behaved child. I was accepted among my peers and strove to do the right things, but I was a misfit and I knew it. I had had a sexual relationship with an adult man named James which you can read about in the book *Social Garbage I*.

I liked school and I did well, even though I didn't fit in with my peers. I seemed to see things in life that they didn't at that point. Mr. Nickel may have seen that in me. I really don't know. For whatever reason, he took me under his wing to teach me about fishing, and maybe even some things about life. He was a gentle, caring man.

That was a turning point in my life. Perhaps it was my coming of age. Who knows? The science and math of fishing was a concept I could grasp even though I didn't understand much about it at that time. Learning was fun again. I had lost my adult friend, James, that year, but I was able to put the skills he had taught me into helping Mr. Nickel. Mr. Nickel and I, with my parent's blessing, came to an agreement: I would help with repairs and painting of the Nickel's camp in exchange for him teaching me how to tie flies. It was a different relationship than the one with James. James and I had a very physical friendship whereas Mr. Nickel's was intellectual. I loved them both – just differently.

Back in the days of no cell phones or Wi-Fi access, people used battery-operated radios to get the weather forecast. One day a storm had been forecast. It was expected to be a big one, and was going to last a while. Perhaps it was not going to be a hurricane, but it would be on the edge of it. No one in my family was afraid of that lake. We all grew up there. Knowing your boat or canoe, and how to pack it could keep you safe. This time may have been a little different. My dad had to take care of some business regarding buying logs for his sawmill and they would be back the next day. When Mr. Nickel asked if I should stay at camp, my mum seemed very OK with that. It was a one-night stay for me at camp with an adult next door.

After my parents got the boat launched and headed down the lake I got a home-sick feeling in my stomach. Even though I had guided my uncle and aunt around the lake, I had never been there alone. Mr. Nickel seemed to have an understanding of how I felt. He never made an issue of it. He just said it would be a good chance to practice tying a "Grey Ghost," which is a type of fly for fishing. Which I sucked at. I always glued my finger to the last thread and created a pointy bit that the fish didn't like. He never yelled at me, but he had another student who I knew didn't mess up a simple fly like the Grey Ghost.

After I glued my finger to the hook, Mr. Nickel asked if I would like to eat with him. Knowing I had a Chef Boyardee boxed pizza at my camp (which I was capable of making) I said yes. I don't really remember the meal other than that it was fresh fish. I don't think it was a fancy dish, but it was not the way my mum would have cooked it. It was special in my mind.

After dinner we talked a bit as the thunder clouds rolled across the lake. The wind was bad when my folks left for home-shore, but this was crazy. As the rain came and the lightning started he asked if I wanted to stay with him. When I looked him in the eye I wanted so badly to stay with him. Even so, I chose to stay in my camp alone that night. There was huge thunder and lightning that night and for a twelve-year-old I did well.

I'm not sure why I didn't stay with Mr. Nickel. I was pretty sure he felt the same for me that James had. Even though James had ended our sexual relationship, I still felt it was our special thing together. Perhaps to share that with someone else didn't seem right to me. I wish I had stayed, though.

Several years later Mr. and Mrs. Nickel sold the camp abruptly and moved away. I was never questioned by my parents as to whether he "touched"

me or molested me, but I think sexual issues may have been part of the reason they left. Back before the hysteria that started in the '80's, parents knew their children would experience things and live through them. I saw Johnny, the other boy who had also been a fly-tying friend, and he had really bad things to say. I often wonder if Johnny stayed one night during a thunder-storm. His homophobia, based on his time in the military, and the things he said about Mr. Nickel, makes me question that.

The Futility of Punishment

HD

[A speech given in January 2018, at a Toastmasters/Gavel Club meeting, Ione, California]

Suppose you came home to find that your house been burglarized, or that your car has been keyed. Suppose you learn that your daughter's been picked on and bullied at school, or that you're a victim of identity theft. Suppose, maybe, your best friend is dead, killed in a crash with a drunk driver.

When things like this happen, we expect someone to be punished. We expect punishment partly because we grew up with it, so it seems as obvious as breathing air or drinking water. But we also "expect" it in another sense: that is – we want it. Human beings want an "eye for an eye," as the saying goes, and this moral arithmetic is often labeled "justice." But that's just a lie we tell ourselves and one another to mask the truth. The truth is, most people don't really care about justice – what they want is revenge. Revenge feels satisfying, you know?, And ultimately that's probably a genetically inbuilt function, like sweet things tasting good to us. It's probably human nature – our evolutionary history has produced an instinct for reciprocal altruism, and part of that adaptation includes a natural taste for retribution. Still, the fact that an instinct is natural doesn't mean we should necessarily indulge and rationalize it. After all, as John Stuart Mill observed 150 years ago:

"The human moral intuition is nothing but a device for consecrating all our deep-seated prejudices."

100 years before that, Ben Franklin – who had a much better sense of humor – quipped:

"'Tis a wonderful thing to be a reasonable man, for it enables one to provide reasons for whatever he is already of a mind to do."

Although most everyone believes that "punishment works," I'd like to talk first about whether punishment is even a "good thing," irrespective of its effectiveness. Unfortunately, I can't say much about "moral goodness," not unless I believed in some absolute morality that applies to everyone, which I absolutely do not. All I can really do is begin where many ethical

discussions start, and that's with the issue of governmental murder, euphemistically called the "death penalty."

When I was in middle school, around twelve years old I guess, I was assigned to a social studies group discussing the "death penalty." Two girls in the group were enthusiastic supporters, and when I alone said that state-sponsored murder was about the worst crime I could think of, they were dumbstruck.

One said, with a teenybopper valley girl accent:

"Oh my God! Like, how can you not believe in the death penalty?? Like, what if your mom was, like, all stabbed to death and raped and left in a gutter for rodents to, like, use her hair as a nest? Wouldn't you want that psycho – killer to, like, get the chair, or whatever?"

I guess it's around ages eleven, twelve or thirteen when people really start to solidify their moral identities. I sometimes wonder what identities these girls were developing. Maybe they grow up to be prosecutors. Or prison guards. As for myself, I had never before thought much about questions like the ones we talked about in class that day, but once I did, I found that the answers came easily.

They're the same answers are given similar discussions today: yes, if my loved ones are seriously hurt or killed, of course I would want revenge, just like everyone else. I would want to kill the guy myself, maybe even torture him. But, see, I also know that's exactly why I shouldn't get a voice in the situation. I probably won't be able to see the person as a person, but only as a target, and that's no foundation for justice. Just as I said years ago in school, I'll say again today, the time to ask me what the right thing to do is is now, when I'm rational, not after I'm all hyped up on outrage and blood-lust. That angry, heightened emotional state would be the time to remind me what I had said in cooler-headed moments, then hold me to my own higher standards. That, to me, might be a path to something like real justice. If you agree, I think you have the knowledge that at least suggests that there's nothing morally redeeming about punishment, because the suffering of the wrongdoer is as sad as suffering of everyone else – maybe sadder, since institutionalized punishment is 100% intentional, and what could be more cruel than the cold, calculated decision to hurt another person?

A notable American thinker, Joshua Warren, wrote that:

"Punishment is always an objectionable thing, producing evil even when it may prevent other evils".

This seems reasonable, and I used to believe it, but I've come to think that putting a price tag on bad acts lets people feel justified in doing them so long as they are willing to "pay the price," so to speak?

The thing about punishment is, it reacts to behaviors, but it never addresses the causes of the behaviors. I believe punishment actively deflects attention from causes. The biggest fans of punishment are usually also those least interested in the social conditions, such as poverty, that led to punishable behavior in the first place. The only "causes" punishment panderers ever want to talk about are the supposed rottenness and evil of the people who hurt others, but I think that is the short-sightedness Gandhi was referring to when he said:

"There are millions hacking away at the branches of evil, but so few going after the roots."

I propose we start asking ourselves the question; could punishment actually nurture the roots of evil? Beyond the example of violence as a "solution", might all those "price tags" – a spanking for this, school suspension for that, jail for this other thing – might those consequences actually undermine the development of personal responsibility in society? After all, punishment lovers love to say "don't do the crime if you can't do the time," but what does that convey to those who can do the time? What then? Anything goes? I have a feeling many people in our transaction – oriented society really do think that way... Maybe even right here in this room.

I realize that suggesting that something as universal and central to our collective consciousness as punishment is both immoral and ineffective is a hard sell. Futile, even. But I have two examples I hope might make you say "Hmm."

The first has to do with laws, prisons, and "crime". Obviously we have more laws today than ever before, and we also have far more prisoners today, per capita, than we had 50 or 100 years ago. If all of this punishment "worked", then how can we also have roughly the same crime rates – many would say even higher rates – then we had 50, 100, or even 150 years ago, when the first penitentiaries were invented? If people still assault, rob, rape and kill one another at roughly the same frequency as ever, how can anyone still believe punishment "works"?

The second example literally begins at the beginning. Hasn't every baby tasted punishment by age 2? Is there a six year old on earth who hasn't been made to suffer after some sort of "misbehavior"? But if punishment "worked", then how could there still be any misbehaving seven or eight-

year-olds? Yet there are, and they get punished too – at home, at school or on their sports team. There is a lot of punishment going around, and still the world is somehow full of "bad" ten-year-olds, twelve-year-olds, teenagers and adult. But how? If punishment truly "works", then tell me: how the hell is our thoroughly punished human race not virtually perfect, generation after generation, or at least in every person over the age of five or six?

I'll leave you with two final quotes to sum up my take on punishment. First, Oscar Wilde said:

"Community is infinitely more brutalized by the habitual employment of punishment than it is by the occasional occurrence of crime."

I fully believe that. I also believe, emphatically, what the anarchist philosopher William Godwin puts so bluntly:

"All punishment is a tacit confession of imbecility."

I submit that this is all too true. We punish because we are too dumb, or too lazy, to think of anything better, and so the tragic cycle continues. Thank you.

Feathers

HJ

Prison can be a very lonely and scary prospect for a MAP (minor attracted person) with a sex offense. Most of us are sentenced to decades in prison. A few lucky ones get less time. Some are placed in institutions behind giant walls. Others go to prisons surrounded by a double fence topped with razor wire. Once inside, you have to hide who you are in order to survive your term of imprisonment.

Thankfully, recent changes within the federal BOP (Bureau of Prisons) have made living in prison with a sex offense much easier. There are now eight designated Sex Offender prisons where the sex offender population is at least 40%, the rest being comprised of gang dropouts, people that have told on others (testified against them), protective custody and ones that just cannot walk around in a regular compound due to issues with inmates. These prisons are spread throughout the U.S., and can be easily looked up on the BOP website.

Once a MAP is at one of these facilities it can still be a difficult process to meet others like himself. No one wants to put themselves out there right away and join with the wrong crowd, but it does happen all too often. In our desire to talk to others we reach out too quickly when someone offers their hand in friendship. I knew what kind of prison I was going to and was prepared for what I would encounter. That is, I thought I knew, and I thought I was. What I would encounter and help create was beyond anything I could have imagined. This is my story about how I began a decade of my life in prison, and the special group of friends I helped form there.

After nearly 23 months in the Grayson County jail, I was finally on my way to a federal prison. What a relief. I'd finally be able to go outside and enjoy all kinds of weather and exercise. Up until I left we had joked in our pod about these SO prisons. We imagined a high gay population, and this would be like a really bad gay cruise ship. (Yes, I am an openly gay SO). We would laugh at the prospect of finding love in prison. We realized that, with the amount of time some of us had, it really was possible. However, love had eluded me in recent years so I really doubted I could find it in a prison.

As I left my little pod of friends that March morning in 2016, tears were shed, hugs exchanged, hands shook and well-wishes were given. We all had hope, as I walked out, that one day we would see each other again.

Leaving there was bittersweet for me in one way. I was excited to see what the future held. On the other hand I was leaving behind friends that had been there for me when my mom passed away. The bond we had formed over that meant a lot to me, but I knew that what they had done for me helped prepare me to face this new journey. So I wiped away the tears, held my head up high and left for the next stage.

Thanks to the U.S. Marshalls and the BOP I got a "free" two week tour of the country. Con Air lived up to its reputation with top-notch bologna sandwiches and stale cookies. A stellar way to travel, that's for sure!

Eventually, two and one half weeks later, I arrived at my designation in northern Ohio – my temporary home for the next seven and a half to eight years. As the bus pulled up and I saw the razorwire-topped fence and large buildings, my pulse quickened. The reality was setting in. I was here. This was something I was going to be facing alone. My family was either past or they had cut me off, and my friends, well they just floated away on the wind. It was all up to me now.

The first 24 hours were trying, to say the least. All six units are open dorms with 2 to 3 man cubes. Each side of the unit (each unit has two sides) holds 160 people. So that makes the average population here around 1900 people.

The cube I was placed in had two black men in it already. No sooner had I walked in the cube when one of them asked me if I was "one of those cases." I admitted I was, and was quickly told I needed to see the unit counselor in the morning and get moved. No threats were made, but it was clear I needed to find a new place to live ASAP.

The next morning I woke up late, looked around only to see everyone (mostly) gone. I quickly got out of bed, got dressed and walked to the front door. As I looked out the door trying to figure out what was going on, a gentleman approached me. For the sake of this story, and to protect his identity, I will call him "Joker." He introduced himself and offered to go to breakfast with me and to the hygiene line (toilet paper, one razor, toothpaste and one bottle of three-in-one soap). This was a lucky break to meet someone this nice I thought. After breakfast he took me on a tour of the compound and showed me where everything was. We agreed to meet after lunch to walk around the track and talk.

During our walk he told me that he was an SO That quickly progressed into a religious discussion that I did not feel comfortable with. The conversation quickly went south from there. He began to describe his conspiracy story beliefs: that Rick Warren (an author of *Purpose Driven*

Life), President Obama and the Pope were planning to take over the world. While we walked back to the unit, he expanded on that and said that Obama was the false prophet and the Pope the Antichrist. As quickly as I could I found an opening and made my escape.

I figured that I would encounter some strange individuals while I was here. It just didn't occur to me that it would take less than twelve hours to find a fruitcake. To Joker's credit though, he did come to me sometime later and apologized for his bad first impression. But I still steer clear of any meaningful conversations with him. Eventually that day, I was able to track down the unit counselor and get moved. The new cube was a better fit with two other SOs already in there, though, as time went on, I learned that one of them was an uber right wing Christian. He believed that no gay could go to heaven unless he repented and turned heterosexual. This would lead to many battles as the months went on.

Over the next week, I started to approach people that I felt were safe to talk to. During this time a guy I came in with caught up with me in the unit one day and started a conversation. He seemed pretty harmless, so we made plans to have lunch then go walk the track. I learned that he was a same-sex MAP and that he was gay. "Stark" (not his real name) and I began to hang out on a daily basis and became very good friends.

It was difficult to find other MAPs to talk to, so Stark and I devised a game of sorts. Using the FBI profile of sex offenders (30 to 40-years-old, white, well-educated, from good families and money), we took it a bit further. Once we thought we identified an SO we tried to guess their age of attraction (AOA) and which sex they were attracted to. We would then make it our mission to get to know the individual and see how correct we were. Our track record in "reading" people was spot on. I would say our accuracy rate was in the 90th percentile.

One day while playing "the game," we came across a rather large man ("Moose") walking with an obviously younger, thinner guy ("Vlad"). They were a confusing pair for us to figure out. We couldn't decide if they were a couple or just good friends. We were sure they were sex offenders though. We made our guesses on them and figured we would come back to them at a later time. In the meantime, every time we saw them we would say hi or wave to them. Eventually they started speaking to us in passing but it didn't progress past that.

While we continued to share personal stories I told Stark about a symbol that was created in the mid-'90s. It was a blue inverted triangle that a friend of mine on Free Spirits Boy Chat created to represent same-sex MAPs (one that I wear proudly on me every day to represent who I am,

and also to remember my friends from Free Spirits and my hope they are all well and safe). I told "Stark" to keep an eye out for anyone that had it as a tattoo or used it in any other way.

Several months passed by as "Starks" and I reached out to other sex offenders on the compound. The more we got into the SO and gay community, the more we saw how it seemed hopelessly fractured – different factions within the groups bickering back and forth, keeping them from coming together. It was sad to see.

Then one day it happened. "Starks" came to me and seemed rather excited. He told me that he had seen the symbol (the triangle) on a set of dice out at rec. They were owned by none other than the Moose! This was our way in to talk to him now. Now it was just finding the right time to approach and and introduce ourselves.

A short time after the discovery of this symbol on the dice, Starks made the move. He caught up with "Moose" in the rec yard and walked the track with him. As I figured, he was very cautious on who he got close to and stayed to himself for the most part. Several days after Starks' "meet and greet," I was introduced and a friendship was forged. During that initial conversation I told him the history behind the design on his dice. He was unaware of its origin.

In the weeks that followed, we learned that Moose and Vlad were very close friends, nothing else. They were both MAPs, but Vlad was into the girl-love (GL) side, not boy-love (BL). The more we hung out with them, the more MAPs we met. This led to Stark and my reaching out to others we knew and inviting them out to join us each evening after dinner. We started sharing books, magazines, newsletters and outside references. During this time (the latter part of 2016) the number of gays, BLs and GLs began to increase. Several were people in the gay community who decided it was time to bring the gay family together through a "community picnic" on "the hill" or, as the haters called it, "Peter Beach". It was scheduled for a Friday night as soon as we were released after the 4:00 P.M. count. I was asked to reach out to as many gays as I could and invite them to come out for an evening of unity, food, fun and lots of laughs. The event drew 150+ people and brought the community closer together. Closer than it had been in quite some time.

One cool fall day a large group of us were on the rec patio laughing and talking. One person spoke up after looking around at all of the SOs on the patio and said, "Birds of a feather flock together." As I looked around, I was amazed that the number of SOs outnumbered everyone else. It was

great to see them out enjoying the evening instead of being huddled in their cubes afraid to come out.

Within the large group of SOs we had splinter groups (factions) form. One group emerged as the head. This group adopted the name "The Feathers." We were/are a group comprised of same sex MAP's (BLs). The focus of our faction was to bring at least one or two SOs each week and introduce them to the group. This was done to show new people there was nothing to be afraid of. It was also done to show the haters we did not fear the vile words that would spew from their pathetic mouths.

As the weather started to improve in early 2017, our numbers on the patio increased even more. The effort of the Feathers' reaching out was working. This was beginning to irritate the hater groups. Allow me to explain who they are.

Haters: this encompasses the whole group of people that literally hate all sex offenders. They believe that we are all baby rapers and should die.

SOL.I.D White guys: this stands for sex offenders living in denial. What an amusing little group of pathetic individuals. They spew more crap out of their mouths than a toilet sees in a month's time. Those who protest the most have the most to hide. That is so true with this group. They have fake paperwork sent in to fool one another that they have "clean" paperwork. This way they can "fit in" with certain social groups or religious groups.

Rats: those here for telling on other people and who are not capable of living on a normal yard. They like to call others rats and chomos to keep the attention off themselves.

Drop-outs: gang members who, for some reason or another, have dropped out of the gang. They still try to act like a bad ass, and hook up with others from the same gang to form the same gang on a protective custody yard. Confused yet? Because it sure makes no sense to me!

The Great Pretenders: these can be all different races and ages. They pretend to be the womanizers, collect girly pictures, have multiple "baby mamas" and sit around talking about titties and pussies as they watch Jerry Springer and Maury Povich. Then when the lights go out or behind closed doors they head to the showers, bathroom stalls or laundry room. And there they want to jack off in front of you, have you suck their dick, or suck yours or even fuck. Back in the light of the day they cling to their heterosexuality until the lights go out again.

Now we come to my personal favorites:

The Cock-Sucking Christians: Now before you get all up in arms about the name I've given them let me tell you who they are. These are gays and BLs that believe they are going to Hell because they like men. They don't understand what the scriptures really mean. In the name of "Christianity" they put down their own brothers and sisters in the LGBTQ family and they deny their own sexuality. They believe if they are with a woman, that will keep them from thinking about their attraction to men. Some also believe that just because they have oral/anal sex with men, it doesn't make them gay/bi. You have to live the lifestyle to be gay; the acts themselves are not necessarily gay. This makes me laugh and they look like the fools they are. I've been challenged many times by people like this to prove my point. When I explained to them what the Bible actually is talking about, they get mad and stop listening. They would rather believe it's all a "learned behavior" – one we can turn on or off at a moment's notice. Please keep in mind, I'm not bashing Christians, true Christians. I myself am a Christian and know many that would never think like these others. This is for the ones hiding behind a faith and not following it.

Finally, there are some that are here for reasons other than I've listed here. Those individuals represent less than 5% of the population.

These groups, while they represent a minority of the prison, do their best to make life difficult for sex offenders in every unit. They try to own all the televisions, tables, chairs, the TV room, and living cubes. I say if you have to come to prison so you can "own" something that will never belong to you, then you're a pretty pathetic individual.

As our group of Feathers grew it enabled us to hear more of the things happening in the units. Moose continued to be instrumental in reaching out to MAPs and keeping the group unified. Other MAPs began coming to us and telling us about problems they were having. This was critical so that we could help them with what was going on.

Early in 2017, an older gentleman came to us. He was having an issue with a bunkie that claimed he was an ex-professional boxer. Threats were being made and "Will" was afraid something could happen. It was ridiculous to threaten an older man just because of his charges. Moose took Will aside and gave him several ideas to resolve the situation. We followed up through other MAPs in the unit to make sure that Will did as Moose told him to. Shortly thereafter the threats stopped and Will was safe once again.

Not long after that, our young man, "Trailer", came to see us and talk. He was in severe debt and being stalked by a predator – one that thought if he brought Trailer enough gifts that he could buy his way into Trailer's pants.

We explained to the young man that if we helped him with the debt it was a one-time thing. The other situation would have to be handled delicately, but directly. He understood and agreed to the terms Moose laid down for him. Over the next couple of weeks we were able to take care of the problems he had. The Feathers had come together to help another person.

As more buses come in we keep an eye out for any new MAP's. Once we identify a new arrival we try to help them out until they can get their property or new items from the commissary. Through this outreach effort that Moose organized, we have been able to expand our group and personal social circles, by helping others.

It was through this special group of friends that I was privileged to meet "Alexander". While aggravating at times he has become a friend like no other. Whatever the future may hold for the two of us, I treasure each moment I spend with him. I don't think he will ever understand how much he means to me and that's too bad. One thing for sure though, he will always hold a very important place in my heart, because it's a very special thing that we have and share. (Perhaps he sees it, but I don't think he does the way I and others do).

As we move forward we all want SOs and MAPs to feel safe. Until these draconian laws are eliminated, it will be up to people like the Feathers to ensure the safety and security of those coming in.

The "hater factions" will see we are not afraid of their rants; we will not submit to their threats or intimidation tactics.

We've come a long way in the nearly two years I've been here. It's nice to go out and see the gays, bisexuals, transsexuals and MAPs filling all areas of the recreation yard – all of them having a good time, laughing, playing sports, playing pool, arts and crafts, lying out and tanning, talking and spending time with their significant others.

There is still a lot to do. But we are a closer group because of the efforts Moose set into play. Now it's time to continue to do what we do best: reach out and be a friend.

Nepiophile

KS

Introduction

For the better part of my life I've been a part of the MAP (Minor Attracted People) community and have talked to many of them who wanted someone they could share their thoughts and desires with. They wanted to find someone who knew how they felt about little girls and boys. If you're reading this and you have those feelings, you are not alone. Your feelings have been my feelings. Your fears have been my fears. Lastly, your love for a child of any age (or sex) is my love. This story is for you.

Childhood

My childhood was not normal. Of course, I didn't know this until I was a teen. I was born in 1979 to a dad who was in the Air Force and a mom who left college to support her husband's career. I have always been a sexual child. From my earliest memories my dad would take me to different hotels to have sex with other boys, girls, men and, a few times, women. As I was growing up, child porn consisted of the Polaroids that people took and physically traded. It wasn't until I was like eight or nine that I was videoed performing sexually. I know what you're thinking. You're thinking I'm going to play the victim card. Nothing can be further from the truth. I felt like a prince. I can really recall only a few instances where bad things happened. For the most part it was fun.

I can remember one instance very well. I was seven. My dad had told me we were going to take a road trip. I remember how he would smile at me as we talked in the car. We arrived at the hotel and we met up with a guy with a teenage boy and a baby girl who was tiny. We got inside the room and, after eating, me and the teenage boy were told to get in the shower. "Is this your first time?" the boy asked.

"No, is it yours?" He kissed me as the man took pictures of us. My dad just watched. We then had sex. I was still learning so I was coached a little as they took pictures. I remember that we took a shower to clean up and as I came out the baby girl was naked on the diaper pad. I was then told to perform sex acts on her. I will not go into detail.

I attributed my nepiophilia (baby love) to that day. Many of those hotel visits happened, sometimes with the same children and often with others. My dad and his friends seemed to really enjoy watching, taping and

photographing me with teenage boys and with girls under two years old the most.

I became a pro at having sex by about eight years old. The frequency of the hotel visits increased and they started filming me. My dad, to avoid suspicion from my mom, put me in Cub Scouts, Little League and basketball. It seems, as I look back, that it was arranged very well.

I also have a sister who is two years younger. Amazingly, my dad never did anything sexual with her and never even tried to get us together. I remember asking him about that once and he got really angry. We will come back around to my relationship with my sister later.

To wrap up my first ten years of life I will say I still have many good memories. I loved having sex with other kids, grown men and others. During a few times it hurt, and I was confused, but overall I was treated like a prince.

When I turned ten the frequency of the hotel visits went down, by eleven they were almost nonexistent. When I was eleven the bottom fell out. I remember my dad telling me he was going away and it was time for me to forget everything. He and my mom would fight constantly, I was so confused that I was prone to violence and started having trouble in school.

By age twelve my dad left us totally and moved to another city. I only saw him when I got driven to see him. I was a total wreck. My mom had to work two jobs and was trying to get a degree. I started selling drugs and was prone to violent outburst.

Let me back up a little. I mentioned my sister earlier. Since she was born we have been close. When I was ten that closeness turned into a sexual relationship. At first when she was eight and I was ten, it was a game. We would kiss and touch. We made a pact to keep it secret.

I became a full-fledged nepiophile around that time. I would get my sister to wear diapers (Pampers of course). I wanted to find parents and babysit and have fun. I had a thing for small infant girls (newborn to 1-year old).

As I approached twelve years old my mom didn't know how to handle me. I was selling pills. Often I carried guns I got from friends and was getting into fights at school. She made a decision to send me to my dad. He lived in New Orleans. When I was dropped off he registered me in school, gave me \$50 and told me food was in the refrigerator. He told me not to get in his way. I remember hating him. Before, I was a prince, a movie star, but now was nothing to him. I'm going to skip forward a bit. Nothing good happened in my life for a year. I sold drugs, was shot in the stomach

during a drug deal, almost died and then got sent to Spokane, Washington to my grandparents house.

My grandmother was physically abusive and it was a bad couple of months. My aunt had a two-year-old daughter though, and she was gorgeous. I took a liking to her and started babysitting. I remember she would always run around in her diaper and I would corner her and put my hands down in her diaper and play with her. I waited till one night when her parents told me to babysit overnight to do more sex things with her.

I was such a bad kid in Spokane, my dad didn't want me so my mom took me back.

My sister was overjoyed. I remember my mom picked me up and then left me alone with my sister. I was almost 13 and she was eleven. She had grown a little and I remember she had these tiny, mosquito bite boobs. That night I remember vividly making love to her twice. The next day my mom introduced me to the guy who would soon be my step-dad. He really saved my life. He told me it was unacceptable to hit women. And to deal drugs. That really calmed me down. Me and my sister became even closer emotionally. She knew all my secrets and kept them.

I'm going to skip ahead to when I was sixteen. This was when the Internet was wide open and, for the most part, you didn't have to worry about cops prowling. From the time I was five I had been fascinated by computers. My dad gave me my first real beating at age seven after I totally took apart the first family computer. (Yes I put it back together, kind of).

By eight, I wrote "Basic" and made stupid little games. By sixteen I knew how to make computers work. The Internet opened my world to others who felt the way I did about little girls. I found tons of people who would talk about girls, and were even interested in me again. Newsgroups, chat sites and communities: I became a member of all and a creator of quite a few. Child porn was everywhere, and in 1995 not a lot of cops were trolling. I constantly, in my late youth, made connections and talked to people who were MAPS. I loved how fluid the Internet made things

The sad thing was, I noticed that even in these groups people placed themselves in camps. Homosexual pedophiles versus heterosexuals, guys who liked ten-year-old girls who thought guys who liked five year olds were sick. It really kind of pissed me off. Here is the way I think: I am a nepiophile 70% and pedophile 30%. I don't ever judge anyone. I don't care if you're into a newborn baby or a seventeen-year-old girl or boy. I don't judge.

At the end of my childhood I really had no direction. I was seventeen years old and working at a wastewater treatment plant and making a living. I was a member of multiple networks and really just coasting through life. I loved my childhood. Just because a few bad things happen doesn't really make me regret it. I will say that I miss a lot of my friends in the networks that I was a part of. I hope they are doing well.

The only thing I hate is how my dad ended everything, and most of all how he then discarded me. I will say from experience that as a child I seldom felt victimized and when I did my dad would take care of it. I don't think sex is always harmful. What I found the most harmful was the abandonment and disinterest I was shown at ten years old.

Adulthood

My adulthood started off with a bang. The FBI started progressively going after child porn networks, websites and gatherings. To give you some perspective, let me tell you how things used to be. In the early 1990s most people who were caught by the authorities for child porn were people who took pictures and then developed them at their local store. The store then called the cops and "game over".

When I was a teen in the 1990s they had child porn credit card sites. To state it simply that was when the Internet was the wild west. Most of us just did what we wanted. That ended around 1996. I remember one network in particular. I'll call it "High", but that was not its real name. I began to see members acting strangely. I saw some disappear entirely, and I also saw a lot of weird activity in "dump boxes" (e-mail accounts where you dump porn and then let tons of people have the password). I would elaborate further but you get the idea. What really opened my eyes is when I started investigating accounts and became aware that the feds had infiltrated peoples user names and were reusing these identities to get into networks, pretending to be those persons.

I also started hearing on the news and reading in the newspaper about the different stings that local, state and federal authorities were conducting.

I was eighteen years old. I had dropped out of high school and was still working at a waste water treatment plant. I worked graveyard with no one around and the job was simple. I wasn't happy though. Because of the chaos in the networks and my general bored attitude I decided to do what most young men do. I joined the military.

To wrap up this part I will say that most of us thought we were untouchable. We thought the Internet was anonymous and no one could

catch us. The war lines had been drawn. This is when the smart computer people got together and started using secure methods for conducting their affairs on-line.

A new weird tech race had started. On one side were the feds who are out of their depth but had lots of federal cash to close the gap. On the other side we had communities that worked together and avoided detection. I myself helped a little but ultimately, at that time, really started doing my own thing. I joined the Navy and for a while left it all alone.

Margaret

My Navy career was a universal failure. I joined at 19 years old. I looked like I was 13. I was hyper-intelligent in my job (operations specialist), but I didn't get along personally with the people. I was stationed in a southern base on an aircraft carrier. Let me clarify, I loved the job and I loved being out to sea. I just hated the culture and tradition. The one thing I enjoyed was that I got my high school diploma and started taking computer science and engineering courses. I was being sent to a navy school for training a lot. This is where I met Margaret.

In September of 2000, I was sent to the southern base to take a three week class. I was invited to a huge picnic hosted by the base command. I ended up going, I still remember how I was dressed. I wore khakis with Jordans, a white T-shirt, with this really amazing button up shirt (that I wore unbuttoned) that had a blue and silver Japanese dragon on a black background.

I was being ignored. (I looked like a 13-year-old, so I guessed that was the reason.) I was about to leave when I spotted her. To give you an idea about myself, at that time I had just turned 21. I was 5'8" tall, a dirty blond with baby blue eyes (contacts), and a high school frame with some muscle. I spotted her and I was in love. She had black hair with a few purple highlights, a heart-shaped face, a beautiful little training bra, and a nice bubble butt. She was wearing a purple miniskirt with a black top and some sneakers. She had a choker around her neck and a very bored expression on her face. I thought she was about 14. So I walked up to her and we connected. It was like finding a long lost friend. We talked for two hours about everything. The only mistake I made was that I lied initially and said I was 15. I found out her name was Margaret. She was twelve. She had just been removed from her mom's house and sent to live with her dad. He was on a deployment so she lived with her step-mom. We parted with a long hug and she gave me her home number and her email.

This is where things got interesting. I had abandoned my networks but was part of a Yahoo AB (adult baby) group. I would express my nepiophilia by role-playing and in private chats with other users. Most, if not all of it, was very graphic and sexual in nature. We role-played constantly of sexual intimacies with newborns, infants and toddlers. Margaret was still under the assumption I was 15, and I was busy with training, so we didn't get to see each other. I made up an intricate lie that my dad was a pilot and we lived in Jacksonville and I was home-schooled. We talked on the phone every day and met on Yahoo.

I was role-playing in my AB room when she popped in. I was being so sloppy with my user name she just saw the room and followed me. She then asked, "Could I be your only baby girl? I'm getting kind of jealous!" So I'm just sitting at the computer stunned. (I'm at a USO using a computer). I told her that she's the only baby girl I need. She was going on 13 and I just went for it. We role-played for two hours. We talked about diapers and baby clothes. I listened her to tell me her story of how her step-dad had been sexually active with her since probably birth and how she herself had an interest in babies.

We connected but I had a huge dilemma. I was going back to my home base in a few days and I still had not told her the truth about my age. So on the last day before I left I went to see her. I took a cab and saw her outside and hugged her so tight. Her step-mom was on the phone so we went to her room upstairs. It was so crazy because we just started kissing and I just consumed by her. We did not hear her mom come up the stairs but she caught us kissing and petting and told us to come downstairs. We went downstairs and Margaret sat in my lap and we talked. She told me how she had never told anybody about her feelings, and I reassured her that she was my "baby girl" and that I had the same thoughts she did.

When I left her that night I felt like I found my soul-mate.

The next day I traveled to my home base and, besides a few emails, I didn't talk to her. The day after that I called her and we had a three hour long talk in which I told her my age and that I was in the Navy. Surprisingly, she was cool with that, but was not cool with having to lie to her step-mom and dad.

For the next couple of months we engaged in a long-distance relationship. I got real sloppy and emailed her from my ship's email account. The relationship was very intense and we talked often about babies in a sexual manner. She also loved wearing diapers and owned a baby bottle. She kept this from her parents and loved that she could be open with me.

Then the bottom fell out.

Margaret's step-mom and dad got suspicious. We would talk on the phone for hours. I was sending her pictures of babies and little girls from a Jock Sturges website called "little angels." All in all I disregarded any safety precautions.

It was right before Halloween that year that things went boom. Margaret was going to be a baby for Halloween and I was on cloud nine. She popped into Yahoo and told me she had come clean with her parents. I was terrified! Her dad was a chief on an aircraft carrier. This spelled big trouble for me. Surprisingly, her dad sent me an email to my ship account and told me calmly that I could have a "last call" with Margaret and that he would leave me alone if I left her alone until she is 18. So what did I do? I threatened him and told him he was a horrible dad and that I loved his daughter and we wouldn't ever stand to be torn apart.

If I could go back in time and slap myself, I would. To this day I don't know what the hell I was thinking. There are so many ways I could have handled things. He called NCIS. I was investigated and court-martialed as fast as possible. They also sent me to a brig they had where "sex offender treatment therapy" and I was forced to take enter that program at age 21.

My final thoughts on this are that I was so desperate to hold on to Margaret that it consumed me. Before Margaret, I had never really met a nepiophile and really could not talk about my feelings. I believe that I just didn't want to let her go and she was only 13 years old which made her attractive to me as well.

SOTP (Sex Offender Treatment Program)

I am not going to go into a lot of detail about my SOTP experience but I do want to make a few points. I am totally cool with any MAP, drug dealer or any person who "wants" to change himself truly. If you're in prison or even if you're not, I applaud you for working to change. I walk "the path" which is a spiritual promise I made to myself. Since I was a teen this is what I believed:

I walk with my head up seeing all paths. The one I choose is my choice, and no matter where the road takes me I will take responsibility. I will never be seen playing the victim, for I walk the road I chose.

I have always known that the path I chose could lead to prison. That being said I adapted to the brig and SOTP. My point is this. When I took SOTP, I found MAPS who swore up and down they were not MAPS. They ridiculed others and made a big show of "the change" they were making.

Some of them used God to say they were changing. It was a sham. These same people who would condemn me in public, would privately talk to me about sexual acts they fantasized about.

I get it that we had to play the game in SOTP. The difference is that I never compromised my beliefs to do so. This also isn't just something that happens in a prison setting. I have seen MAPS who threaten, or condemn others as being "more messed up" than they are. Any MAP who truly wants to change I applaud you. But I give my middle finger to any MAP who judges any other because of that person's gender likes or age preference.

So anyways, SOTP was really just a make-believe session for me. Funny story time!

A little incident

I'm in a SOTP and I'm really bored so I order a bunch of magazines. One of them is "American Baby" which is an infant care magazine with some hot pictures. You would think that they would reject it, but no, they let it through. So I'm reading it one day and one of the shrinks comes around. She walks up and asks "what are you reading?"

"American Baby," I respond.

"I don't think that's appropriate," she says.

"My sister just had a baby," I say.

"What the hell do you care?"

I pause and smirk as I show her a picture of a small infant girl. "Do you think she's cute?" I ask.

Needless to say I got in trouble. I was not allowed the magazine and I got some murderous looks from that shrink for a long time.

Does He Think of Me Fondly?

MC

The contrast for me between absolute joy and abject misery was incredible. One morning I awoke with his warm, soft body in my arms, feeling perfect and alive with every one of my senses rejoicing at how good life could be. The next morning, I was alone and terrified in a hateful concrete cell. And he was gone.

I prefer not to reflect on prison too much. Instead I prefer to write about him. The only person who ever really loved me the way I always ached to be loved. His name was Alex. He was eleven years old when we met and twelve that final morning we awoke together. He was everything.

I need to tell you that Alex was the most remarkably beautiful boy I have ever seen. Really, you just need to trust me on that. I had just moved in to share a house with my friend Neil and his nine-year-old adopted son Marshall. Neil was an exclusive boy-lover as I am. Little Marshall was totally adorable and the assumption many would gather is that our home was some sort of pedophile orgy. But nothing was further from the truth. There were almost no discussions of a deeply illicit sort about Marshall between Neil and me. When we discussed our attractions to boys, it was most often in romantic and wistful ways. Our erotic fantasies, which we both very much had, we largely kept to ourselves or they were sometimes expressed in the anonymity of the Internet. Nine-year-old Marshall was my buddy, cute as hell and cuddly for sure, but exempt from overt sexualization.

Neil had already told me of a good-looking boy in the neighborhood who visited daily, often with other neighborhood kids. Neil's house had a mattress-floored video-game/playroom perfect for group gaming and sleepovers. I had not yet met this boy, Alex, but Neil described him once as being "Elijah Wood-like", with huge eyes and a beautiful face and body. "He's your type," Neil said.

I remember the moment I first laid eyes on him. He wore a gray and burgundy crew-neck sweater. He burst into the house at 3:30 one afternoon and, as he hastily kicked off his still tied sneakers at the base of the stairs, Neil introduced us. The boy would define and shape the rest of my life.

He took a passing interest in me, but he was more enthused about the video games upstairs. But I thought he was stunning. His chocolate brown

hair was a lush, wavy mass with bangs falling into the most beautiful green eyes. They dominated his face. His skin was creamy white and without a flaw. I remember thinking he looked like an anime character, with the big eyes and shock of wavy hair. He was gorgeous, but there was a melancholy look in those eyes. I was smitten.

Perhaps it wasn't love at first sight for me, but it was definitely serious attraction. I have known since the second grade that I was attracted to beautiful boys. Somehow, instinctively, I knew I wasn't gay. That label didn't feel right. I just knew. This was something different, I had a Village People album when I was nine and I was told they were gay. I looked at their mustached, hairy-chested image with sexual repulsion. It had to be a boy for me to be interested, and I assumed I was the only boy in the world who felt that way.

As I grew up, my attractions didn't age with me. I met this understanding about myself with horror. I was sickened by my own feelings, feelings that were unwanted and that I had no control over. I was mortified at the possibility of being discovered, terrified of being perceived as homosexual. I put up big facades and hoped it would go away.

It never went away.

My childhood defies negative stereotype. I was raised an only child in the southern California suburbs by alternative, loving parents. I was never hit or emotionally abused. I retain this to this day my two best friends from early childhood. (Neither of them knew of the terrible secrets I kept.) I've never used drugs and have never drunk to excess. The number of sexual experiences I had in my youth equals absolute zero. I do regret a few instances when I had opportunities. My most salient was the time my friend David and I went skinny-dipping in his backyard swimming pool when we were twelve. He had to explain to me what skinny-dipping meant, since I didn't yet know the term. "You mean naked? Outside? Completely naked? With our boy parts wiggling about?" I said yes instantly. And felt that twinge of momentary regret mixed with excitement and anticipation. You know the sensation I'm describing. But with the promise of group showers after P.E. class awaiting junior high in the coming fall, I figured, why not? It turned out the nudity was thrilling and David was cute. But when he offered me a poolside blow-job (a term I knew) I turned him down. I was just too scared. Homosexuality in the '80s was very taboo. It's a shame I lacked self-confidence because I would have had oral sex with David. What a shame indeed.

That fear and shame stuck to me for a long time. I forced myself into an adult sexual relationship with a woman feeling that it was the only way to

normalcy. And despite my young adult years spent working with kids at camps – and loving their companionship – I absolutely never touched one with sexual intent. Sure, I fantasized. Oh man did I ever. I never felt guilty about masturbation. But an honest relationship alluded me. I assumed it would probably never happen. My life would consist of sexual frustration, romantic longing and a hell of an active fantasy life.

I love hanging around the boys. I "get them" and they like me. I try to balance being fun and kid centric while still retaining my adult ethos. I'm young in spirit, but still very much an adult man. No one likes a man child. Not even boys. As an adult in my thirties, I was finally comfortable in my own skin and with who I was. I'd come a long way.

Upstairs, Alex set cross-legged, his eyes fixed on the TV, his thumbs hyper-kinetic on his PlayStation controller, unaware of anything else. He was wearing boxer shorts and nothing else. I sat in a beanbag chair and made small talk and marveled at his perfect body. It almost seemed surreal. Why had he stripped down? I later went back downstairs and gushed to Neil, "Alex is in his underwear!"

I must have sounded like a giddy, horny high school boy.

"He always does that", Neil said. "That's Alex's uniform."

I later learned that this was simply Alex's way. He was most comfortable wearing the least clothing. So long as he felt safe, at home or at Neil's, he would live his life in his underwear. I'm convinced that Alex would have lived as an at-home nudist if that wasn't socially discouraged. Alex was free with his body and no one was happier with this propensity than I.

As the weeks passed, Alex came to our home almost every day. There's some sort of serendipity that occurs naturally when a man likes a boy and a boy is open and receptive to the man. They fall for each other. It didn't take long for Alex and me to become inseparable. Physically inseparable. It was if two people had been waiting their entire lives to meet and create a connection. That connection was strong. It got to where Alex would run directly into my arms each day as he entered the house, knocking me to the ground, wrapping his legs and arms around me, refusing to let go. I was happier than I had ever been, my brain bathed with feel-good hormones and no doubt his too. Is this what it's like to be drunk? Over time, I fell into a deep love for him. Something far greater than simple sexual attraction. Each day, he dominated my thoughts... How many hours until school let out, until he would charge into my arms again pressing his beautiful face to mine, with his wide smile? He motivated me. I went to

the gym to look good for him. I worked my career with new ambition, new purpose.

I work from home as a composer in the film industry and I adjusted my working to synchronize with Alex. Instead of beginning at 11:00 AM, I'd start at seven. On many weekends, he spent nights at our house. Everyone seemed to recognize that Alex and I now shared a unique bond. The other boys accepted our intimacy completely as natural matter of course.

The prosecutor would later call this bonding period “grooming” a standard label they use to denigrate the benevolence of a man and a boy enjoying their lives together.

It wasn't long before Alex stopped sleeping on the floor of the game room with the other boys and began crawling into bed with me. The first night he did so, I was elated. I got absolutely no sleep that night. I spent the entire night gazing at the beautiful creature sleeping so contently next to me, listening to his soft breathing, gently pressing my face into his hair to smell his shampoo. Alex always smelled sweet and clean. God, I was falling in love.

I could not have comprehended that first night we slept together that he would soon be my bed-mate every single night for one amazing year.

Alex had been bragging to his mom – single and divorced – about me. I got to know Jessica, and after a tentative start, we became friends. I came to like Jessica more and more, finding her a funny, slightly crazy free-spirited type who adored her son and dedicated her life to him. She was an attractive, affectionate mom. The boy's father was not. He lived only minutes away but was mostly indifferent in the life of his son from a day-to-day perspective. Jessica had divorced him years ago for domestic violence. A real prize of a guy. I met him once or twice and found him a pretty ineffective personality.

The fate of ironic timing occurred when, at the same time Jessica was in a panic over her child support payments being cut off, my friend Neil chose to take over his grandmother's mortgage and move with Marshall into her house. The carefree, boy-infused, weekend sleepovers in the game room would no longer be. Jessica floated the crazy idea of having me move into her spare bedroom, pay rent and be a steady presence for Alex, since he so obviously loved me. I accepted.

It was early summer and I now lived with my dream boy. We were happy. Perhaps that's why Jessica accepted it when, on only the second night, Alex began sleeping in bed with me.

It seems improbable doesn't it? Her underwear clad eleven-year-old son cuddles in bed with his thirty seven year old best buddy. To that I say, you simply had to be there. Our lives and our circumstances must be regarded in context. I know that Jessica let the little things go, trading convention for that that was effective. Prior to knowing me, Alex had become difficult. Arguments between mother and son had escalated. He was becoming a resentful and angry young man. Sideways rage at his father was bursting out in all directions. Now, Jessica could see, first hand every day, how happy Alex was. Her son had transformed into an exuberant, joy of a child, side-skipping delightfully around the house. Side-skipping down the hallway, his bare feet meeting, then shuffling apart, his thick hair waving as he frolicked, in his underwear. Always in his underwear.

The boy was wickedly smart. A straight-A honor, roll student and a perfectionist who never had to be reminded to do his homework. He was deep. A thinker. He possessed striking musical ability and an exceptional singing voice. Although he cared not for team sports, he was gifted athletically. He had the kind of body that matched my ideal. He was small for his age, which I liked, but he wasn't scrawny. His body had a certain softness that aroused me to no end. He had firm, smooth legs and a shapely butt that was so salient that even his mother teased him about his "plump tushie." Alex never seemed to mind. He was at ease with his body. He once was reclining on the sofa wearing only my boxer shorts, which were oversize on him. (He sometimes wore mine about the house). His mother noted that the leg of the boxer shorts had ripped up his thigh, exposing his flaccid boyhood.

"I can see your penis!" She scolded, only half indignant. It was impossible not to laugh. "Cover your penis!" But Alex only responded with an impish grin arms behind his head. He was un-bothered. When I was twelve, I'm pretty certain I would have been mortified had my mother seen what I had going on between my legs. But this was a more self-assured boy than I.

Alex basked in our evenings in bed together. He liked to talk – could he ever. And I learned that he craved for someone to listen and to affirm him. He had legitimate grudges and gripes and I gave him a thoughtful ear. "Only you understand me" he would say to me.

"Only you understand me," I would repeat to him. We were each other's only honest confidant. By now, he knew cognizantly, not just innately, that I was a "pedophile." He was the first to use that word and he spoke it with its original content – not as a diagnosis or a slur. He knew exactly how I felt about him, how he turned me on, emotionally and erotically. He reveled in my attraction to him. To spike my fetish for his feet, he'd

wiggle his bare toes in my lap. "You like my feet don't you?" He teased. Yes I did. He was playful. On occasion, he would pull the waistband of his boxer shorts down, temptingly low, leaving no doubt his total hairlessness. Lowering the elastic almost to the point of no return, he would suddenly snap them back up, erupting into giggles at my stupefied facial expression.

At night, he would sit on my lap on the love-seat in my room. Facing me, we would kiss as I ran my fingers through his gorgeous hair. Kissing his neck, his shoulders, moving my mouth to his boyish nipples, he would throw his head back. "God you are so beautiful, you are so sexy," I would moan, meaning every word.

I would move him to the floor, pulling off his undies, tossing them across the room, moving my mouth down his hairless body, kissing the soles of his feet and sucking his perfect toes. Then kissing my way back up his leg. "Suck it... Suck my penis," his boy voice urging me on. I would bring my mouth to where he most wanted it, sucking him to a powerful dry orgasm.

In bed, we would cuddled like Zeus and his beautiful Ganymede until we fell into the greatest sleep. I believed then, as I sometimes would tell him, that I was the luckiest man in the world.

Jessica, Alex and I functioned as a family. We spent a lot of time doing family things together and I took us out to dinner often. But on one memorable evening, Alex and I went alone together to his favorite restaurant – Asia Gateway Buffet – where we dined on crab legs, his favorite food. He looked amazing that evening. So cute, so bright and charming. There had been a chill in the evening air so I wrapped my black cotton scarf around his neck which he continued to wear over his T-shirt as he ate. I felt so proud to be sitting at the small table with him. I wanted to shout to everyone that the super handsome boy with the pretty green eyes was with me. Couldn't they all see how lucky I was?

"You're the cutest kid here" I said to him. He blushed

"I am not. You're just love-blind" he responded, grinning sweetly.

Across the table, I told him how happy he made me. It was then that he gave me the greatest compliment of my life. "Before I met you, I was so angry. I was going to go bad. But then you saved me," he said. After dinner he took my hand in his, as he sometimes did in public, and we walked out of the Asian Gateway Buffet together, with fingers intertwined.

That night I brought him to a long, slow, dry orgasm. He then lay quietly, saying nothing. I wondered if he had fallen into post-orgasm sleep. I watched his chest gently rise and fall in the low moonlit bedroom,

breathing softly. "Put your arms around me," he broke the silence. And so I did.

Alex made me feel like a man. That may be difficult for a non-boy lover to understand. But Alex fulfilled the longing I had for a purpose, the purpose to love someone fully, the way other people do. He made me more human. And by fulfilling every one of his boyhood needs – including sexual pleasure – we had the greatest of symbiosis. In so many ways, it was the purest of relationships.

Anecdotes cannot convey an entire relationship. What I've written here is only a snapshot. I haven't mentioned how we made each other laugh – sometimes until our sides ached – or the difficult days of tears, holding him through a crisis. I could mention rushing him to the E.R. for sunburn pain, or his effusive contrition when he destroyed my laptop computer by accidentally dropping it into the bathtub. I could reflect on the sweet moments such as his twelfth birthday party when he exclaimed "This is the best birthday!," the inside jokes and silly nicknames we shared and the meaningful songs we would sing together. I can't write of all the profound things he told me, or the mutual revelations we discovered about ourselves. I could try to write of the curious mind that asked me about terrorism, religion, history, and the attempts I made to give thoughtful answers, to never condescend, and how my honesty and clarity with him only made Alex hold me closer. But a relationship is more than the sum of its parts. Sometimes a man and a boy can love each other. Sometimes it is not only void of abuse, but it is in fact beneficial. Sometimes it is life-affirming. This was one of those times.

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A man I knew only anonymously on-line was arrested in New York for child pornography possession. In fear for his future, he gave up my info. My IP address was traced to Neil's old home. Neil was arrested for the same charge. Marshall was put in the foster care system. The same system where he had suffered abuse – real abuse – prior to meeting Neil. The last I heard, Marshall had been emotionally traumatized by losing Neil, his home, his friends, his stability. He had regressed emotionally and was even defecating himself. That is not the Marshall I knew.

Alex was interrogated at school. He was told that I had a string of child sex victims, (not true) that he needed to implicate me to protect other kids. Alex insisted that he had not been molested. He tried so hard. The authorities doubled down. He was interrogated again. He broke down, in a bad way. His naked body was violated by a female County employee who swabbed his penis and testicles for DNA. His genitalia and ass were

photographed for a total of 29 pictures. "Standard procedure" they called it. Graphic details of his pubic development were noted involving vivid description of his circumcision scar.

Alex accused me of forcing him to sleep in my bed and of threatening him. When I read the interrogation report, it was impossible for me to believe or even comprehend.

From County jail, I stayed in contact. Since I had not received an order of any kind telling me not to, I wrote to Jessica every day. I always included a separate letter to Alex, trying to keep his spirits light even though the sudden loss of me had traumatized their world, and Alex was growing resentful again.

Initially, Jessica was furious with me. A pedophile in her home! But Alex ardently defended me, offering clarity, insisting that I didn't harm him "in any way possible," (his choice of phrase). She came to forgive me and to forgive my feelings for her son – her initial hysteria soothing in the light of empathy and reason. She knew my character. I had lived with her. She witnessed the changes in Alex's life. All positive. "Alex misses you", she wrote to me. "He cries for you."

One day, Alex broke down crying because he felt guilty for falling for the lies that the authorities had told him. I wrote to him and told him that he had done nothing wrong, that this was 100% my fault. My heart ached for him. He was innocent.

An unannounced Child protective services visit prompted Alex to defend me, insisting that he had not been molested.

The social workers went ballistic. "No" was never an accepted response to "Were you molested?" The boy's feelings and observations about his own experience were never to be respected unless they were negative. Alex was removed from his home, and Jessica stripped of her parental rights because they supported me. Alex was temporarily put into foster care, then into his deadbeat dad's custody. Jessica, who had done nothing wrong except to respect her son, could now visit him only under the suspicious eyes of a child protective service worker. Alex was put into indoctrination "therapy" where he was required to accept that he was the victim of abuse. In my jail cell, I vomited from stress. A restraining order was initiated by the authorities. I was cut off. Like the end of that old Christopher Reeves movie "Somewhere in Time", when his perfect love vanishes before his eyes. He was gone. Forever.

Three torturous years passed while I waited for trial. My third and final public defender, a woman of malcontent, scolded me and told me

“pedophiles are evil.” This was my advocate. She refused to offer any reasonable defense. Her job was to put me in prison. Alex was required to testify. In court, I sobbed, albeit quietly, looking at the fifteen-year-old, clearly miserable on the witness stand. Zombie-like, he never once looked at me. When prompted to identify me in the courtroom, he pointed in my direction, but his gaze turned away. The boy who ran into my arms would now not look at me.

I was given 70 years in prison. A defacto life sentence. I was also ordered to pay \$1 million in restitution to Alex, something he never desired or asked for, based only on the prosecutors ludicrous whim. Neither Alex nor either of his parents attended the sentencing hearing nor did they make a written statement, even when prompted to do so by the prosecutor.

I told a friend that I think I neurotic because, after eight years, I still love and miss Alex as if I lost him yesterday. I still lie in bed and remember him. I remember his voice, his smile, and his laugh. I try to hold on to the feeling of his fingers gently tracing over my face, the weight of his body in my arms, the scent of his skin. I still fantasize about seeing him again someday. That's crazy isn't it? Eight years and I haven't moved on? What's wrong with me? People break up every day. Why don't I let go of Alex?

"Because you didn't break up," my friend said. "He was taken from you."

So I lie on my bunk and I wonder what Alex is like today as a twenty-year-old man. What does he look like now? Would I recognize him? What are his values? Does he think of me fondly, ever? Where is he? All I've had for these eight years is silence. It's been a form of passive torture.

Six months ago, I worked a prison job as an education clerk. My boss was sympathetic to me and being a bit of a rogue, he allowed me to use his computer for the Internet from time to time. I found Jessica's Facebook page. What I saw on it made my heart swell a bit and gave me reason for hope, finally believing that everything is going to be okay. She posted Alex's high school graduation photos. He looked better than I ever could have hoped. He looks the same! His beautiful green eyes are exactly the same. He is handsome, strikingly so. I see that he visits his mom in the same home we shared. He attends a local college. He still smiles.

Most pertinent, in a series of pictures taken in his mom's living room, Alex wears a black V-neck shirt with thin white stripes. His brown bangs kick over his forehead. I looked closer. Could it be? It is, it's my shirt. He is wearing my shirt.

My family has had a difficult time with this. It's just too foreign for them to comprehend. Perhaps it's my certitude that my relationship with a

prepubescent boy was healthy and right that alienates them. Maybe if I told them that I'm ill and in need of help, it would be easier for them. I have told every non-BL I know that it's not difficult to understand how I feel, because it feels exactly the same when you fall in love, no matter whom you love.

Prison is awful and inhumane. I still awake every morning in a haze of disbelief that a nation full of empathetic human beings will treat a person as if he's a piece of filth because of whom he loved. I'm here with the worst – violent sociopaths, gang members – evil is everywhere. I don't think like them, look like them, talk like them or hate like them. But I'm here too. It's difficult to grasp, I'm really here.

So I work out hard. I'm still in good shape. But my face reflects the stress of the years. I can't do anything about the face. I play guitar at the professional level. I've written over 100 songs. The loss of the greatest love of your life is a great songwriting inspiration.

*I'm all alone, a stranded Island
I dream about you, night and day
and in my bones, I'm petrified
and feeling far away*

*I'm far from home, a stranded island
sometimes I hear you, call my name
it keeps me strong, it gives me hope in finding
you again someday*

I read a lot of nonfiction. I like science, history, memoirs, the social screens, books that develop the mind. Conversely, I look forward each night to prime time TV when I can disappear into escapism. I like clever comedies. The Simpson's is my all time favorite and makes me think of Alex, cuddling in my lap, laughing at Homer. I also watch a lot of PBS and world news.

I crave pen-pals. Communication with the outside world is central for my emotional health. But I can't write to anyone who can't accept the real me. I'm incapable of faking it any longer.

Since he became an adult, I began writing short notes to Alex addressed to our old house in the form of birthday and Christmas cards. I don't receive them returned in the mail nor do I receive a response. I don't know if I will ever get the validation from him that I wait for every day. To know that he remembers me. The way that we really were. That we were each other's first real love.

That he's still him and I'm still me.

I miss him terribly.

If Only Someone Would Listen

AT

I am a minor attracted person currently nearing the end of a fifteen-year prison sentence for performing oral sex on a small girl. The girl was in my care at the time, and I loved her like a daughter. Becky (not her real name) was a relative of my wife, who had watched her five days a week since her birth. Becky had no father in her life. When she first began to come to our house I was in my early thirties and had no children of my own.

A close bond soon developed between Becky and me. I was her de-facto father figure whether I wanted to be or not. In truth, I became completely enraptured by her as she grew into a beautiful little person over the years.

I won't defend what I did. I recognize that it was inappropriate, and I would not want to repeat it. However, I question whether or not my actions constituted "abuse." What I did was done with love and respect. Becky was not hurt, harmed, or traumatized in any way. It was clear that for her the experience was both fun and pleasant. When reported to her mother later, the experience was recounted in the vein of a fun activity that we had done together that day. Upon witnessing her family's reaction however, Becky clammed up and would not say another word about it. My question is: If no one is harmed by an action, wherein lies "abuse?" For me personally, the saddest part to bear is that this incident, for which I am forever labeled a "sex-offender", is not an accurate representation of who I truly am as a person. What is worse, is the fact that this incident would never had occurred had I been free to express my sexuality in an honest way.

I have always been conflicted about my sexuality. Growing up in Texas in the eighties, I had the "normal" interest in girls and in older women that is seemingly required of teenage boys. But, I was also attracted to boys. In fact, I began to have sexual experiences with other boys as early as age nine, very likely sooner. The first, although I cannot today remember exactly when it began, was with my friend Oliver (not his real name). Oliver and I had known each other literally since birth. Our parents were best friends. There are pictures of the two of us in a crib together. Our dalliances would continue into our twenties, ending shortly before I was married at twenty-seven. This activity seemed at the time-and still does-completely normal to me.

As a kid, I was a puny nerd with bad hair and what seemed to me to be the ugliest glasses my folks could find for me to wear. I was uninterested in,

and quite bad, at sports. As a result, I was teased and picked on a lot. Any girl I got up the nerve to talk to would promptly shoot me down with gusto. The teasing from the boys and the scorn from the girls combined to drive my self-image right into the dirt, where it would remain for much of my life.

Throughout my adolescence I would vacillate between liking girls and liking boys. I would crush on a girl one week, and on a boy the next. There was seemingly no difference to me. Was I born this way, or was this the result of my early sexual experimentation with Oliver? Hard to say.

Although it didn't strike me as odd at the time, looking back I can see that a change occurred in me when I was fourteen. There was an eleven-year-old boy in my Boy Scout troop that caught my eye. I was instantly smitten with him. This is the first time that I can remember being attracted to a noticeably younger boy. Until then, I had been attracted to boys my own age. Nothing happened between this boy and me, as I was much too naive and timid to ever act on my desires, a trend that would continue into adulthood. This was the early eighties, after all. It wasn't yet socially acceptable to be gay, or even bi-sexual, which is what I was then beginning to consider myself to be. At least in my corner of Texas one did not admit to such things.

High school was, for the most part, a living hell I couldn't escape from fast enough. Throughout high school and beyond, I would pursue relationships with age-appropriate females, while at the same time, being more and more attracted to boys. I was largely unsuccessful with both camps. The girls were flat uninterested, and I hadn't the balls to approach the boys. Of course, there were a few exceptions. In four years of high school, I had a total of two short-lived relationships with girls, neither of which ever went "all the way." I wouldn't have sex with a female until I was nearly twenty, and that experience was a near disaster. I had no clue what I was doing.

By the age of eighteen or nineteen I realized that I had a problem on my hands: I was predominantly attracted to boys between eleven and fourteen. Even then, I knew that to follow those feelings, though they felt perfectly natural to me, would lead me straight to prison. Sex with minors was illegal everywhere, wasn't it? That's what I thought then, and for many years after. What was I to do?

After high school, my plan was to become a teacher. A band director, specifically. Although it no doubt added considerably to my dorky image, band was the one part of high school I had enjoyed and was actually good at.

Regardless, that plan had to be abandoned. That profession would put me in close contact with the boys I was so fond of. I knew without a doubt where that would lead, and I had no desire to go there. Everyone knew what happened to guys like me in prison. I began to distance myself from the Scouts – another feather in my nerd hat – for the same reason. Until an alcohol-fueled episode ended it when I was eighteen, I had enjoyed a fair bit of respect as a leader in Scouts. I was looked up to by the younger boys, a position I was quite pleased with. Scouts was the one part of my life where I didn't feel invisible, or out of place. Well, mostly, anyway.

I was adrift, with no idea in which direction to steer my life. I didn't have a clue as to what I wanted to do, or be. I couldn't understand the conflicting desires I had inside. There was no place to turn, no one to talk to. How does one talk about being attracted to young boys? The answer is, one doesn't.

I suppose a religiously inclined person could have turned to their religious authority for advice, although I am sure they would not have received anything useful. But by this time, I had long been a stout atheist, so that avenue wasn't an option for me.

Ultimately, I did what many struggling teens do. I turned to alcohol and drugs. My late teens and early twenties were a jumble of binge drinking, getting high, and general stupidity. I can only put it up to blind luck that I didn't end up in serious trouble or dead.

My folks spent a lot of time worrying about me and not knowing how to help. What could they have done? If they ever suspected back then what my true dilemma was, they never let on. Sexual issues were not discussed in our house. Even now, they know only of the incident with Becky, not of my feelings for boys. No good would come of their having that knowledge, so I choose to spare them that bit of extra pain. I can only imagine the anguish it causes them to have their only son be a convicted child-molester. Once, in my early twenties, I tried talking to my Mom, but she wasn't emotionally equipped to understand what I was going through, and I couldn't really broach the core of the problem.

By my early twenties, I had very little self-confidence. I never had anyone to teach me how to be successful with the opposite sex. I had no idea what it was a woman looked for in a man. I was completely clueless. My Dad is great. We have a wonderful relationship, and I love him, but he taught me absolutely nothing about women or sex. Nothing. So, by this time in my life, I would rarely even approach a female for fear of rejection. I would instead drink myself into oblivion while I fantasized about boys.

Worse still, on the rare occasions that I did somehow stumble into an intimate situation with a woman – usually through no effort on my part – I wasn't ever truly into her. It was boys I wanted. This internal dichotomy would lead me to always feel like an impostor in any social situation I'd find myself in.

During this time of my life, I tried out the gay scene for awhile too. But I didn't fit in there either. I wasn't really gay – I had no interest in grown men – or straight, or even bi-sexual. I was a pederast, although I didn't have a name for it until much later.

This same feeling of being on the outside looking in, like I don't fit in anywhere, is still a part of me today. I am still forced to hide my true nature, pretending to be something, or someone, that I am not. We are reminded daily by the media that "pedophiles," and "sex-offenders" are the very worst dregs of humanity. We steal children's innocence, and corrupt their minds. I must surely be a terrible monster, right? This is what our good, wholesome, Christian culture wants us to believe. For many years, they had me convinced that it was true.

Due to the societal pressure to conform, combined with the fear of imprisonment and social castigation, I felt forced to make a difficult decision: Follow my true heart and risk prison and all that comes with that, or stifle my real desires and go the route that our "civilized" society expects. Ultimately, I chose the latter. It was easier, and I was weak and timid, and there was no support network for people like me to turn to.

I had unwittingly fallen into a relationship with a young woman several years younger than I. It came about quite by accident. In short form: I intended to do something nice for her when she was hurting emotionally. She took it the wrong way, and suddenly I am in a relationship that I wasn't looking for.

Instead of ending the relationship, which I knew even then that I should have done, I married her instead. I was twenty seven-years old.

The marriage was part of my intentional decision to "go straight", and just be like everyone else. It never occurred to me that I could just go somewhere else, where I could live like I really wanted to. I suppose that I thought everywhere was the same as Texas. I had no experience of the world, and information was nowhere near as available then as it is today.

Now I know that there are places in the world, in our own country even, where a guy like me can live in peace. Places where we aren't demonized and caged up with wild animals just for following our natural inclinations.

If I had had that information when I was young, so much of my life would have been different. I would have been spared years of emotional torture. I would not be sitting in prison right now, with a lifetime of sex-offender registry ahead of me. I would not be a social pariah. I would not have gotten married and fathered two children for whom I am wholly unable to be a parent. I would never have come into contact with Becky.

At the time of the incident that landed me in prison, I was thirty six years old, and had been married for nearly ten years. I had been arrested only once in my life, for disorderly conduct. With the exception of smoking a little pot, I was a regular, law abiding citizen. I had not been with a younger boy since turning eighteen. I had been repressing my true self for eighteen years.

During my ten-year marriage, I had worked steadily, if unhappily, as a butcher at a big-box store. I hated the work, but it paid the bills and was reliable. I had a few good friends, or so I thought. I had a house, nice garden, bowled in a league, and did all the things that were expected of a regular guy.

I had become a respectable married citizen. My parent's earlier worries evaporated. They wondered when they would get to be grandparents. What they didn't know was that the marriage was mostly a sham.

I can honestly say that I did actually love my wife – let's call her Cindy. Cindy and I were very alike and in-tune in many ways. We shared opinions on nearly every subject, from religion to politics. It was her personality that drew me to her. The problem was that I was never very attracted to her physically. Cindy was overweight, and that just doesn't appeal to me at all. I think that I may have fallen in love with the idea of being in love with a woman.

Whenever we would make love, my mind was never really on her. It was always on a boy. In fact, I think that I can say with some certainty that nearly every time I have had sex with a woman, whether Cindy or the very few that came before her, I have fantasized about a boy in order to complete the act. But I was determined to make it work, just to be "normal." I couldn't bear the thought of the alternative.

One of the reasons I had chosen to stay with Cindy was that I didn't believe that she could bear children. We had been intimate a number of times before we were married without so much as a scare, even though we used no protection. Maybe it was me. I didn't know, and didn't want to know.

As it turned out, she had some kind of chemical imbalance I never really understood. That was fine with me. I was beginning to feel that I shouldn't have kids of my own. Cindy, on the other hand, was desperate to have kids. Her whole life seemed to depend on it. She could never be happy without kids of her own. Consequently, she was often depressed, and increasingly hard to please as the years passed. It seemed she was never happy with me, us, or life in general.

In retrospect, I recognize that the marriage was grossly unfair to her. She and I were at complete odds as to what we wanted out of life, a fact she was unaware of. I was disgustingly selfish in perpetrating such a scam just so I wouldn't have to deal with my real feelings. I regret the whole thing, and feel that I owe her an apology. Although, with the way she has treated my family since I came to prison, maybe we're even.

A few years after we were married, I discovered the amazing world of Internet pornography. I had been an avid fan of the back room of the video store for years, but this was altogether different. A person could find anything imaginable here, and some things that were inconceivable. I was never the same afterwards. I would spend every minute that I could get alone scouring the net for images of the boys I had only dreamed of before. What I didn't count on were all the pictures of underage girls I would find. Seeing these images sparked a new interest in me I'd not had before. Now I could just as easily picture myself with a young girl as with a boy.

It came as a shock to me when we had our first child nine years into the marriage. She was a very sick baby. She would spend over 120 nights in the hospital, and go on to have a liver transplant before her first birthday. Six months after she arrived is when the incident with Becky occurred.

As if the stress of having a sick baby who might die at any minute were not enough, we decided to up the ante a bit. For the previous couple of years we had been experimenting with having an "open" marriage. Cindy had never been with anyone but me, and was curious about other women. I had revealed to her that I liked boys, and was hoping to explore that avenue. She was, curiously, OK with that. I ignorantly thought that this arrangement might help ease my burden of pleasing her, which was increasingly difficult for me to do. To that end Cindy moved a troubled eighteen-year-old girl into our home-with my approval, and I pretended to be OK with it.

To my surprise, I became unreasonably jealous of her new playmate. I wasn't even really interested in sex with Cindy anymore, so why was I jealous? What ever the reason, the end result was that I acted out with

Becky. I wasn't really interested in her either, she was too young. The whole thing is still a bit confusing for me.

Regardless, what happened, happened. I can't change it now, no matter how much I may want to. Was it the stress of having a sick baby I wasn't equipped to deal with and a failing marriage, or the pressure of having kept my true sexuality repressed for so long? Did the gluttony of illicit porn add to the mix? I think it was a combination of all these factors and more. What is sure, however, is that had I been able to pursue relationships with boys, I never would have been in that situation to begin with.

Today I still have a passing interest in young girls, though I have no desire to act on it. I am content to admire them from afar. They were never really my thing anyway. What hasn't left me, and surely never will, is my love for boys. That is as much a part of me as is my bald head.

Cindy divorced me around two years after I entered prison. Although I still retain legal parental rights, I've had no contact with my kids since the divorce. The second child, a boy, came during the time that I was awaiting trial. Interesting, yes? My ex has gone as far as to sever contact with my parents as well, even though she continues to pay them for the house we purchased from them. They never see their grandkids, though they live only a mile or so away.

Prior to my incarceration, my wife and my parents had an excellent relationship. There were never any problems or tension of which I was aware. They treated her like a daughter. She had known my folks longer than she'd known me, as she was a friend of my younger sister before we met.

Today I have resigned myself to the fact that I will never be "Dad" to these kids. They will be nearly grown when I am released. No doubt they will have had their minds poisoned about me by their mother or her family. Besides, what teenager wants a father that suddenly appears after having been gone his whole life? And then for that father to be a registered sex-offender who "molested" their cousin? None, I'd think. Surely it would be better for them if I didn't disrupt their life.

In the end, my selfish decision not only cost me my freedom and reputation, but also my opportunity to raise my kids, however poorly I was equipped. It cost those kids their father and their grandparents, not to mention all the cousins they lost from being cut off from my family. It cost my parents the joy of having grandkids. My son is their only grandson, and they have no relationship with him at all. It also robbed Becky of her

father figure, as I was fully committed to taking on that role. She saw me as her Dad, and I was happy to be.

My parents and my sister, my only sibling, while appalled at my actions, have remained by my side throughout this ordeal. The support of my parents has been invaluable to me. I don't know if I would have made it without them. My mother's loving attention surely saved my life in the time between my arrest and my court date. Suicide seemed then to be the best option, but I just couldn't cause my mother any more pain.

With the exception of one old family friend, Oliver's dad, my Mom and sister are the only people from my life before that write to me. Every one of the so-called friends I used to have have completely ignored me since I came to prison. They aren't to be blamed, however, as they are simply victims of the mass hysteria that currently surrounds terms like "child-molester" and "pedophile." They can't help but to be caught up in Christendom's latest witch-hunt.

Prison hasn't been what I expected and feared. Quite honestly, I was scared shitless when I first got here. I had no doubt that I would be dead, or wish I was, within days. I certainly never thought I'd still be here, and sane, ten years later. As it happened, I got to prison after a culture change had taken place. New laws offer sex-offenders a much better chance of survival. To make matters a bit better, I landed in a very calm, safe unit where I can do my time in relative comfort.

I am well aware that other sex offenders have had very bad things happen to them, some right here on this unit. But that has not been my experience. Indeed, I have been very fortunate. I've not had a single confrontation over my case, or even had a single person mention it. I have been very careful of my speech and comportment. That has surely contributed to my safety. Also, I keep to myself as much as I can reasonably get by with. I share the nature of my case only with those who I know to be sympathetic, and whom I feel I can trust.

What has been most surprising to me is that I have met quite a number of seemingly decent, pleasant, intelligent people in here. Certainly they are not the norm, however. I have even met a few persons who are similarly inclined and share my unpopular views. The prison system seems to be teaming with otherwise good people who have been basically thrown away for breaking some trivial social taboo or other.

The more I learn more about how criminal justice is approached in other parts of the world, the more I question how functional our good 'ole American system really is. If this is really the greatest country on Earth,

why do we imprison far more of our populace than any other country? That makes one question our supposed "freedom."

Can anyone really be free in a country where religious moralists are allowed to impose their ideals onto the rest of the population? There is a name for that type of government. It is called a theocracy, and America seems headed down that slippery slope. From my vantage point, we non-Christian Americans are free to express ourselves only in ways that are Christian approved. Step too far outside their lines, and they lock you up.

Prison has had one positive effect. It has given me the time to sit in quiet contemplation and begin to be at peace with who and what I really am. I'm not all the way there yet, but I feel that I am moving forward. Prison is the same as any other life; it is only what you make of it. There are times of laughter and near-fun, which is surprising, and there are times of soul crushing desperation. Of course everyone's experience is different. Difficult as post prison life may be, with registration around my neck, I know that my time here will come to an end, and that colors my outlook. Many others are not as fortunate.

That said, this is definitely not a life I would choose to continue long term. There is a huge amount of unpleasant bullshit and psychological torture that is part of life in here. Joe public thinks we have it real good: healthy meals, free health-care, etc. The truth is much different. But no one cares, we are social garbage, are we not?

Until shortly before my incarceration began, I had always wondered if something was wrong with me. Why was I attracted to boys, I'd wonder. Why can't I just be like everyone else, I'd ask myself. Sure, these desires felt normal to me, but the rest of the world obviously disagreed. Every day on T.V. I'd see people like me denounced as monsters. Often, that is just what I would feel like.

Now, after educating myself to the realities of my situation, I have a different viewpoint. I know, without a doubt, that what I feel for boys is just as normal as anyone else's sexual desires. We are all a little bit different, none better, none worse.

Only recently did I read William A Percy's *Pederasty and Pedagogy in Archaic Greece*, and it was an eye opener. Before reading this book, I had only a rudimentary knowledge of pederasty in ancient Greece. I knew only that it existed. I had no idea of the extent, nor of the high social status the practice enjoyed.

This information vindicated the gut feeling that I have had for many years. The feeling that sexual relationships between men and boys can be

healthy, instructive, and enjoyable for both parties. This is provided, of course, that the elder approach the relationship with honor and integrity, and that he treat the younger with respect at all times. This situation would of course necessitate a wider culture of acceptance in order to stave off cultural stigma.

Pedagogic pederasty as an institution was practiced in ancient Greece for over one thousand years. If this type of relationship was harmful to those involved, would it have persisted for so long? Surely not. Here was the type of relationships with boys that I had wanted for so many years! There was an historic precedent for it all along! And this is from the civilization from which we get so much of our current system of law, morals, and social structure. Our culture continues to idolize and emulate every other aspect of ancient Greek culture except that which was at its very core. It seems that the early Christians did a very thorough job of expunging pederasty from mankind's collective conscience. Or did they?

In truth, pederasty has continued in places right up til today, albeit not in the institutionalized, respected, mentoring tradition of the Greeks. No, instead, it has continued in hushed secrecy, in brothels, and through human trafficking. It has been perverted by the very ones who sought to eradicate it. It's true practitioners were made to feel like sick monsters, punished severely if found out. Like any other outlawed activity, pederasty has become the very thing its original detractors accused it of being.

It has long been my belief that the psychological ills that burden young people following an intergenerational love affair arise more from our society's reactions to these affairs, combined with the need for secrecy due to taboo, than from the experience itself. I am seeing more and more evidence that this is indeed the case. Many young participants in intergenerational relationships are reporting that they are not "victims" at all, but fully consensual participants. I don't have the data to back this up, but it's out there for anyone willing to look f6r it.

This puts the lie to the notion that a person under a certain arbitrary age is mentally unable to consent to sexual activity. This idea is pure nonsense. Just because a law makes it so doesn't mean that the law is correct. This is why we have a system where the laws can be changed.

In today's age of hyper-information-accessibility, the average ten-year-old knows more about the world than a person of twenty did even ten years ago. Young people today are very well-informed and increasingly intelligent. I contend that were we to treat young people as full humans, with the respect they deserve, and all the rights that come with personhood, they would be perfectly capable of making these decisions for

themselves. By continuing to artificially prolong childhood into the teenage years and beyond, we are setting our children up for future failures. Instead, let's help them to understand all aspects of their worlds and themselves.

Furthering this thread, it is abundantly clear that human beings are sexual creatures at all stages of development. According to the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, 1996, fetuses at thirty-two weeks' gestation have been observed to masturbate. There are other reports like this one. These are proven facts, not idle speculation. Who hasn't witnessed a small child touching himself unselfconsciously? The need for these physical sensations is innate. It doesn't just magically manifest at some arbitrary age.

I can personally attest to the fact that at least as early as age nine, and likely much sooner, I was very interested in, and experimenting with, sexual stimulation. The same is true for millions of kids worldwide. We just choose to ignore this uncomfortable fact.

We teach our children everything they need to know about the world around them. Usually through direct, hands-on demonstration. Everything, that is, except for sex. Instead, we tell them that sex is nasty. It's not to be talked about. It's a "sin." We tell them not to masturbate, despite the fact that masturbation is perfectly natural and healthy. We tell them they aren't to have sex until they're married, and then only with that one person for their entire life. This, despite the natural instinct shared by every human being to have sex with many different partners. If monogamy were natural, it wouldn't need to be taught and enforced. We tell our kids that simply having sexual urges makes them somehow "unclean." Pure, religiously derived nonsense.

Is it any wonder then, that we have so many maladapted adults with sexual hangups? We fail to teach our children anything really useful about this most basic driving force of human nature. Instead, we admonish them to adhere to the unrealistic and unnatural ideals set forth thousands of years ago by uneducated nomadic zealots who had not even a rudimentary understanding of biology, or of the workings of the world around them. Or, we simply let them stumble around on their own until they find something that works for them, or they go crazy trying to fit in.

Not everyone has the tools to teach small folks what they need to know about human sexuality and its role in their lives. I submit that this is where minor-attracted people come in. This is where we can shine. We are the ones – those of us who are empathic, honest, and caring, and who are not

corrupted with religious beliefs – that are equipped to guide little people through the awakening process.

It is my belief that had I had a mentor to guide me through the process of sexual awakening, I would not have spent so many years in frustrated self-loathing. A mentor, as a part of a wider culture of acceptance of differing sexualities, would have been able to help me to deal with the conflicting feelings and desires that I struggled with.

This teaching process can only begin to be implemented, however, after humankind is able to break free from the suffocating idiocy of religion. We must learn to see ourselves for the sensual, sexually driven animals that we are. We must accept that all forms of love are good.

The world today is enjoying a much wider acceptance of "alternative" lifestyles, to be sure. Minor-attracted people, however, are not yet included in this new-found acceptance. We continue to be cast as monsters who destroy children's lives and "steal" their innocence, even though the truth is that the vast majority of us would never wish to harm a soul.

Certainly there are those broken individuals who enjoy hurting others, and some number of these take their pleasure from children. The question I think we must ask is: How much of this type of behavior is the direct result of the sexual repression of living in a society dominated by "morals" derived from religion? This is a difficult and offensive question for many. Nonetheless, it is a question that will need to be addressed eventually.

I believe that it is time for us to begin having open, honest dialog concerning childhood sexuality, the appropriateness of age-of-consent laws, and the increasing criminality of otherwise consensual sexual behavior. The larger public must be made aware of, and learn to accept the ubiquitousness of minor-attracted people. We have existed in every culture, every place, and every time throughout history. We transcend racial, socio-economic, and cultural lines. We will forever be extant. Most of us are not monsters, or predators. We are simply what nature has made us to be. Are our feelings, hopes, and desires any less valid than the next man's? I believe as the Japanese are said to have once believed, that there are no wrongs in matters of the pillow.

While I am not yet ready to shout it from the rooftops, or to wear a sign around my neck, I now refuse to apologize for, or to be ashamed of what for me, and many thousands like me, are perfectly natural feelings. I mean no one any harm. I wish only to be free to love boys, and to have that love returned as I teach and mentor them. That is all I have ever really wanted. But alas, that is a life I fear will never be for me, not in the world I live in.

We must stand up and wrest our country away from the religious moralists who have hijacked it. Let us usher in a new age guided by reason rather than ancient mysticism. Let us base our new laws on facts, not the alleged words of a never-seen, likely imaginary deity.

Despite what many would say, I am not human garbage. I am not a predator. I am a normal, honest, upstanding, responsible, loving human being. I just happen to be a lover of boys. I have something to offer the world, as do others like me, if only someone would listen.

It Was Just What Was In Me

BJ

I was born April 1, 1959. I was then raised by my grandmother and step-grandfather from the beginning. I don't know the total psychology behind the decision made between my parents and my grandparents.

I can't remember not being aware of my own sexuality and participating in sexual activities. I was raised in a large extended family, so having many playmates (relatives) had always been the norm. I can remember always being attracted to boys. I have always had a few sexually active friends and relatives around me my whole life. As early as seven years old, I was actively seeking sexual attentions from boys my age and younger, but I also sought out older teens and adult men to engage in sexual activities with me. I felt the need for this type of attention. I wasn't a neglected child. My grandparents were very loving and attentive. It was just what was in me. I was led by these feelings and desires.

I found myself in loving relationships, both sexual and emotional, with boys my own age and older. Most of these became very taxing emotionally, as I discovered the pain which such relationships bring. They led to the development of much of my current psyche and many of my faults and quirks.

As I matured I began to identify as homosexual or gay. But this wasn't the truth either. I didn't love men; I loved boys, and that has never changed. My love and attention to boys hasn't always been sexual. I have had long-term loving relationships with boys that I never had sex with.

There was a time that I didn't see myself as being abnormal or outside the norms of society. This was reinforced by the fact I was in contact with those who shared my attractions or desires. I was not exposed to the negative social opinions about abnormal or evil sexuality. I grew up in a very small town. But my forwardness to seek out and explore my sexuality was not hindered by any authority figure in my life until my teen years. The '60's was a good decade for my sexual exploration. There was no interference with the development of my feelings and/or views of sexuality and social norms.

But the 70's brought the birth of the child-abuse industry, and the sexual child-abuse industry created a sphere of panic in the otherwise quiet and calm society. Anti-child-pornography laws came to the forefront around 1972. This came after I had been involved in the commercial pornography

industry for about four years. I had seen it only as a way to make money and to do what I liked. I had developed a narcissistic view of myself which carried into my adulthood. I had been glorified by the desires of adult men who had showered much attention on me and fed my ever-growing ego. My exposure to the willingness of men to pay for my attentions was like a drug to my young senses. I saw a means to obtain money for what I had been giving away before. This began a deterioration of my moral fortitude.

Society began to be led blindly by the continuous media exposure to horrendous reports of missing children, murderers of children and sexual assaults of children by bloodthirsty, depraved sexual deviants who hid behind every bush and in every dark alleyway. The sexual child-abuse industry lobbied for laws, regulatory actions and sexual education to eliminate certain sexual orientations and activities. The 80s was a decade of pain and suffering for me. As I matured into adulthood I began to experience prejudice and even alienation from a political community I had spent many years supporting. I was now being attacked by the homosexual community because of my orientation as a pederast. I now had to hide my interests and desires and to begin to live in fear of society.

The psychological pressures to fit into the social structure of the society of the 90's was taking a toll on me. Continually denying my sexuality and searching for acceptance in society, and at the same time trying to live with desires that couldn't be acted upon, was difficult. I became addicted to pornography, which was easily available but unlawful. I felt conflicted and confused by the fact that I grew up being able to act and express myself sexually, openly without guilt or fear, but now had to live in constant fear of myself and my own desires.

As I matured, social pressures and views began to eat at me, causing me to become more and more introverted, reserved and withdrawn. I couldn't maintain long-term relationships or put down stable roots. I was paranoid and fearful of society as, on a daily basis, I watched the witch-hunts for child predators. I was fearful and anxious when out in the social realm. I no longer could enjoy close relationships with young boys openly as I previously could. Pressure to fit into a social mold and to be a model citizen of either the heterosexual or homosexual community was creating great anxiety in me. In response to the views of society, I began to see myself as broken, deformed and even evil. My self-worth plummeted as I took on more dangerous activities and lifestyles.

I often felt isolated, different, and abnormal – a social outcast – and those feelings only intensified as the years went on. As I grew older the chasm grew wider and wider until it was insurmountable. I lived with

overwhelming feelings of guilt and shame, a product of the social pressures and negative views of a nature that could not be changed.

In 1993 I was accused and convicted of aggravated sexual assault of a child, three counts, for three boys. I was an apartment manager and these three boys were residents. They were from eight to eleven years old. I was a strict and authoritative manager, quite skilled in my job. I was the sole maintenance person as well. The boys were a group that hung around together, and were quite troublesome. I began to take interest in them, and I attempted to re-channel their destructive energies into more constructive ones with a program of skill development. I took them into my shop to teach them various maintenance skills.

With time, they began to open up to me about many things, and sexuality was one of them. They were eager to help me with any of the projects I was working on. I taught them to lay tile, replace fixtures, lay concrete and paint walls. They assisted in building masonry walls and repairing asphalt parking lots. They learned about shrubbery, flowers and grass-care. I had three eager and adept helpers. Their behavior took a dramatic change; they no longer were the center of trouble and turmoil. They became attentive to the rules and assisted in the overall cleanliness of the complex and were a help to me and the other tenants.

We would talk in my office, about home life, school, and other relationships they had. I was an active artist and they took great interest in that as well. That summer was a good time. They had lots of time and I kept them busy. We swam in the pool a lot. Then our relationship took a turn to the sexual. I lowered my guard and that was it. At 35 years old I was arrested and tried, convicted and sentenced to twelve years for each boy to be served concurrently.

My family was in a state of denial at first. My parents were a comfort to me in the sense that their love was stronger than the social views of my crime. After my sentence, nothing more was said about why it happened. I was just locked up and that was that. They wrote letters and sent money, cards and photos. But as for friends, I became a stranger. No one wanted to acknowledge even knowing me. I was vilified by the media and reported as being a psychological degenerate preying on children. I was sent to a maximum-security unit in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice – institutional division. I became a number: 697011.

I spent the entire twelve years in the general population, serving and learning. I had bad days – days of fear – and many of days having to defend myself. I was always on my guard and never trusted anyone. It was twelve long years of humiliation and degradation, of continuous and

constant strip-searches and of being humiliated by the guards, both male and female. There were times that I feared the guards more than the other inmates. Psychological, sexual and physical abuse by the guards was a common occurrence. I was then forced to take a 36-month sex offender treatment program. This was a residential program. The psychological trauma suffered in this setting was the most trying of all. Suicides were quite frequent.

I had served every day of the twelve-year sentence, I was denied parole five times due to the nature of the crime. I was released in February 2006 and began a life of torment and fear under the Texas sex-offender registration law. I had registration requirements that were hard to follow, and made it unbearable. I was fortunate to get employment with an aluminum extrusion plant. I worked the late shift and had to drive 45 minutes each way. I worked for just over a year when the company downsized and I was laid off. Then the shit began.

According to my registration demands I had to carry a blue card stating I was a registered sex offender and must renew my driver's license yearly at \$26 per year. (A normal license is good for six years and costs \$10 for renewals). Texas restricted employment of convicted felons and most businesses do not hire registered sex-offenders. Housing was also a problem. As a registered sex offender, most apartment complexes would not rent to me. Also homeless shelters did not allow registered sex offenders. So I was forced to rent at a much higher rate.

I became unemployed, on food stamps. My unemployment covered my rent barely. I couldn't get employment and spent three years unemployed. I became a recluse and found myself lost on the Internet. I found child pornography and stayed away from people completely. In May 2010 I was forced out of my home by eviction. I left the state of Texas and went to the state of my birth. I had hoped to find a new life among my siblings, a new start, but it was not so.

In July 2010, I was arrested by the U.S. marshals for a warrant from Texas for failure to register. This offense is punishable by ten years in prison. It was not my desire to return to the hell of the Texas prison system. I had held onto my computer hard drives, on which I had stored child pornography, and I turned them over to the feds and fought extradition. So Texas dropped the warrant in lieu of the federal case brought against me for possession and transportation of child pornography. I was convicted and facing 40 years to life in the federal prison system, but I took a plea bargain for 27 years. I was 53 years old, so 27 years is a life sentence.

I am now living among inmates that have distorted ideas about the sexuality of other individuals. To them all homosexuals love to suck dick no matter whose it is and can't say no. They perceive all S.O.s (sex offenders) as Chomos (child molesters) that prey upon children to have sex. They believe that all S.O.s need to be killed to protect the world from their sickness. I hear it every day.

I have been doing my federal time now since 2010 and have been to four different units. My first unit was in my home state and I didn't last 30 minutes before they locked me in solitary for my own protection. I spent 18 months in special housing (SHU) before I was sent to Florence Colorado. I was in general population for eight days before I was physically attacked. I defended myself but was charged with fighting and disciplined for it. I was locked in the SHU for 11 months before being sent to Petersburg, Virginia. I was there 4 years, I was able to walk the yard, being that it was 80% S.O.s. But believe me, it was still a struggle. Staff treats you differently and hold the same kinds of prejudices and views of sex offenders as other inmates. Abuse is equally common from staff and inmates there.

I am now at a low custody facility in Ohio. The others were all mediums.

Being an S.O. in prison is much like being a Jew in Nazi Germany. You are labeled a Chomo, and you are a target for assault by both staff and inmates. There is no sanctioned support group for us. The Bureau sees our offense as caused by a defect or disease that is incurable, so there is no hope for our being productive in society. Prison is not too inspiring a place to live. But I have my routines. I read a lot and often write my thoughts down in a journal. I go to the library at least once a week to enjoy a movie or DVD. In order to maintain a sense of social connection, I join other S.O.s where they gather on the recreational yard. I have game nights with friends twice a week. And I spend a great deal of time being invisible.

My parents are dead. All I have is my sisters and a brother who are quite aloof, except my younger sister. She has been my chief supporter and a true lifeline indeed. I am looking forward to early release in February 2035. That is still a lifetime away.

Do I feel that I'm alone in the world? Sometimes. Can I really talk to my siblings about what I feel and be totally open with them about who I really am? No. That in itself is sad, because I really want to.

I write to various family members but they aren't the kind to write anymore. I keep in contact with them through e-mail or phone. I asked my sister to help find me someone who would like to keep in touch by letter.

So she had asked a friend with whom she works with and he started writing me on a regular basis. We don't have anything in common, except my little sister, but we communicate as well as possible.

I feel that I was given a sentence that was unreasonably long for the crime. I was in possession of photographs, none of which I produced myself. This was my way of coping with any urges to have physical contact with a boy. Does that deserve forty years to life? Or even the twenty-seven years to which I agreed, which is a far sight better than 40 years. It is not my desire to die in here.

It is quite apparent why such penalties have been imposed on me. It is a sexual child abuse industry that is spinning tales that sexual photos of minors prompt the diseased mind of the child molester to want to go out and rape children. But studies in other countries have found the opposite to be true, and often include such pictures in their treatment program for offenders. I was dealing with the animal urges with the photographs. The question is has my lengthy sentence had an effect of the amount of child porn available on the Internet, and has it has made an impact on the number of children who have experienced sexual contact with an adult?

I remain convinced my own self-worth. I am a good and decent man, with standards and morals. I have had a positive effect on many lives. Of this I am confident.

The Place

HJ

I was visiting a friend at his family camp on a lake. I'll call him William. Over the last years we have both run the gauntlet of miscellaneous tortures that are meted out to people who have been convicted of sexual abuse.

I am in my 70s, and generally have to get up a couple of times during the night to take a leak. We had gone to bed early – shortly after nine. When I woke for my first piss-call I was surprised to find him sitting in a chair in a corner of the living room, bundled up in a cover. “You’re up,” I said.

He nodded.

“I’ve got to take a leak,” I said.

“It’s raining,” He said. “Just stand on the top step under the eave and pee off the side.”

As I went to the door I asked if he was daydreaming. He said that he was having very violent daydeams.

It was raining hard enough that I didn’t want to go out into it, so I did as he suggested, and peed from the top step. When I returned to the living room he told me to sit down in a chair that was facing him at a distance of about seven feet. I did so. He handed me an afghan that he said his mother knitted. “This will keep you warm,” he said.

When I got settled into the chair with the afghan covering me, he explained that he wanted to tell me about his violent fantasies. He said that periodically he drinks excessively while he also smokes pot, in order to get to a particular place in his head where he’s able to have certain violent fantasies. He wants them. As he described them, he said repeatedly that this was very weird and he’s never told anybody else about it before. He says that the fantasies never involve killing people, because he wants them to suffer.

As I asked him to be more specific about the people he fantasized about, he named people that have hurt him in various ways. One of the main people is his ex-wife who was responsible for poisoning his son’s mind against him, and ending his relationship with him. This was especially painful to William as he had been the one who raised his son while his wife worked. He and his son were very close. But his fantasies also involved people who had humiliated him either while he was incarcerated or when he was trying to reestablish a life for himself afterwards. He also

mentioned some people who forced him into social isolation by their public attacks on him.

He told me that it is good that he doesn't have superpowers, because, if he did, he would be able to get away with hurting these people without being caught. He said that he would do this if he were able to. He wanted me to understand that it was not moral principles, but simply the fear of being caught that prevented him from acting on his sadistic fantasies.

It was clear to me that these were not S&M type fantasies. The goal was not sexual gratification, but revenge. He has been hurt over and over again, and has not been able to defend himself or fight back. He did tell me earlier about a man in the jail that he came close to killing when the man went out of his way to humiliate him. But that was the exception.

As I listened to him, I thought about the different forms of injury that he has suffered. It was the same suffering that virtually every man who has been convicted of sex abuse has also experienced. First there are the losses. Not only is the relationship to the beloved boy taken away, but typically a person in this situation loses a large number of relationships to family and friends. William has maintained a relationship with a sister and with a few friends, but the loss of his relationship to his son was overwhelming. One of the most intense forms of suffering inflicted on people who have been outed is always grief.

Perhaps the second most intense form of suffering inflicted on sex-offenders is humiliation. To be on the registry and to have the public identity of the "pedophile" ensures one of a life of ongoing humiliation against which one is helpless to defend oneself. People underestimate the impact of humiliation.

Sticks and Stones

Nevermind the things they sing.
Words sharp and witty,
As well as stones,
Despite the ditty,
Can break my bones.
Even an eyebrow raised can sting.

People will kill or die to avoid being publicly humiliated.

Additionally, one is subjected to social isolation. Once you have been convicted, or even accused, of the sexual abuse of a minor, you will never

again be fully accepted by your community. You may find niches where they tolerate you, at least tentatively, but your acceptance in the community is always insecure. Such was the case with William. One of the people on his list of those to be hurt was a man who threatened his fragile acceptance in a restaurant/bar where he had managed to get a job.

In large part, he probably chose me to tell about his “place” because he was convinced that I wouldn’t have the same judgmental attitude toward “weirdness” that most people do. But he also mentioned that most people would not want to hear what he had to say. The general attitude he encounters around matters of psychological pain is that you should just “man up” and get on with your life. To try to push against the resistance that others might have to hearing him would risk being accused of wallowing in self self-pity.

I pointed out to him what he already knew, which is that the forms of suffering he was telling me about are intense, and are the lot of all of us who have been outed. And because we are helpless to defend ourselves, or to respond in any effective way, it is inevitable that we will, from then on, be struggling with a inner cauldron of rage. There was nothing “weird” or unusual in what he was feeling. Everybody deals with this rage in different ways. But it’s there in everybody who has been through the experience.

To a considerable extent, William evaded one of the most intense forms of suffering that is the experience the majority of sex offenders: guilt. He did not feel that what he did was intrinsically wrong, and, as he knows, I agree with him on this. Making sure that “perpetrators” feel profoundly and incapacitatingly guilty is one of the main goals of the so-called “treatment” to which sex offenders are subjected. It is assumed that they are all sociopaths, that they knowingly and deliberately injured the their younger partners, and that therefore they must be taught guilt.

He emphasized that “I’m not asking you to do anything. You can’t solve it. I know that. I just wanted to tell somebody else about this.” And of course he was right. I could not “solve it.” That would mean undoing the past.

We are destroyed externally: by having our life situations ripped apart, by being excluded from our communities, and by being incarcerated in a continuing social prison even if we are released from literal prison. We are destroyed internally: by unbearable loads of guilt, by profound and continuing humiliation, by loss of loved ones, and by the condemnation of the innermost source of our love. How many times, and in how many ways, can a person be destroyed, and then pick himself up to re-establish a world and a self that might wish to live in it? I mentioned a poem that I wanted to share with him, about the Phoenix. But I hadn’t memorized it so

I was unable to share it with him at that time. But this is the poem that I had in mind:

How many times

will you break my heart

World?

This Phoenix thing goes

only so far

Before the dust settles

on the furniture

And rises again

only

as dust.

Clearly there was nothing “weird” about his fantasies. When we are attacked we desire to defend ourselves – and when we are deeply hurt, we desire revenge. All of us find different ways of dealing with these issues. The way William found is undoubtedly harmful to his health. The alcohol and the pot will take its toll on his body. I suppose one could fault him on that account, but since he has little desire to live anyhow, this is a small matter to him. Meanwhile he is hurting no one else with his secret retreats to that place where he can vent his rage on a world that has been unspeakably brutal in its dealing with him. Like most “sex-offenders” he did nothing that both he and his younger partner did not want.

Toward the end of our conversation he told me that not all the fantasies he had in his secret place were violent. Some were about positive things that he wished he could have. The main thing he wished for was the right to seek out the kind of love relationships that many societies have deemed honorable and beneficial to both the older person and his younger partner.

He reiterated the fact that he understood that I could not solve the issues that were manifest in his secret place, and that he did not expect me to. He just wanted to share it with someone. He had done so and it was time for me to return to bed.

I got up one more time that night. It was still raining when I went out to the step to relieve my aging bladder. He had gone to bed. I hoped that he was having good dreams.

The Sex Was Good

NN

A late summer's day, just after dinner. When just a few weeks ago, it would still be full daylight, now dawn is casting its red hues into the scattered white clouds and blue sky. I'm sitting on steps of a front porch on Main Street in my small quiet hometown, looking at the red, white, and blue landscaping rocks. I remember how vibrant and organized they were three years ago when Mrs. Cook set them out to celebrate the bicentennial. Now they are faded, dirty, scattered and taken over by weeds. Three years have passed and here I am at a very familiar spot, waiting as I have many, many, many times before. Someone is going to show up. They always do. No matter how we group up and head out exploring the town and beyond, we always come back here, the Cooks' house.

But it is different this summer. I haven't seen much of my longtime school friends. I've been working, and spending most of my off-hours with co-workers, people who are older than me and don't think twice about letting me drink and smoke pot with them. It's a much easier supply of vices than when hanging out with my under-aged school friends. We have to start out early searching for someone who is willing to supply. If old man Joe can be found, we can count on him to fulfill our alcohol request, so long as we have the cash with enough for him to get a bottle. Scoring a nickel bag of Columbian Gold usually proves more discouraging. Some days we would just be lucky enough to find someone to smoke a joint with us.

I am different now too, but looking forward to kicking back and getting high and drunk with my buddies and eventually slipping away with one or two of them to play with each other's cocks – activities we have enjoyed since we all met in junior high. I do miss the simplicity of fooling around with the guys. Lately, I have a "lover." Teresa. A woman twice my age. I do love being inside of her, and giving her an orgasm. Damn! She lets me do it anytime I want, but why does she have to call us "lovers?" I get a little sick in my stomach every time she says it. I mean, she is my mother's age.

Last night went exactly as expected. After getting wasted with the guys and staying out long after my parents had gone to bed, I quietly slipped into the house and passed out on my twin bed. Today isn't going as well. I hadn't seen or spoken with Teresa yesterday, so I called her this morning. She says we are lovers now and that I have to be more responsible towards her. I can't just do what I want. I have to run things past her. But I don't

want any part of that. There are only three things that I have to do: go to school, do my homework, and be home at five for dinner. All other time is mine to do what I please.

I have a more structured life than most of my buddies, but a less structured life compared to most of the kids I go to high school with, and all of my free time is mine to be spontaneous. This summer I'm apprenticing at a concert hall, setting up and striking sets, learning lighting and sound. It's more like getting paid for one big summer party, and I get out of having to be home for dinner every day at five. Now I'm being told I can't do what I want without running it by Teresa. I guess if she was my age and my girlfriend, I would understand where she is coming from. But I always expected that my steady girlfriend would be part of my group of friends. I never considered calling a woman twice my age my girlfriend. So, now I have a lover?! A divorced woman with four kids, ages nineteen, seventeen, fourteen, and twelve.

Sex wins. On the side of the road on route 13B, while the Old Man of the Mountain looks down on us, in Teresa's room where a sketch of the artist eating Teresa's pussy hangs over her bed, on the bed of her seventeen-year-old son, all summer long in any dark corner of the concert hall, and now that I'm back in school, in a high school broom closet. Anywhere there was a risk of getting caught. Anywhere except my parents' house.

Almost six months into my senior year of high school. My media studies class is working on a large video project requiring me to be at school early in the morning before class starts and returning later, after school. Before this project, I had been spending all of my free time outside of school with Teresa. Now my media studies teacher is out for an undisclosed amount of time and somehow Teresa manages to get hired as the substitute. I think my media studies class and this project is going to be a breeze for me. Not that it was difficult before. But Teresa demeans my input while fawning over the other guys in the class. The girls are getting suspicious.

Regardless of how much attention Teresa is giving to the other guys, we always find time to slip away. Sometimes we have sex; in my truck, her car, an empty locker room. You get the idea. Sometimes we smoke some weed. Other times, we do both. The girls start questioning me, wondering what Teresa and I are doing. Once asking if we were having kinky sex. I just laugh it off. And even though I spent the summer working with Teresa learning many of the skills we are working on in media studies, my participation is less than well received by her while the other guys get much of her attention and praise. She seems to pacify the girls with just enough respect to not concern themselves with how they are doing.

It all started out innocently enough. I'm seventeen. I land a paying apprenticeship at a nearby concert hall where Teresa is the stage manager. She is popular and I find her enlightening. We strike up a conversation and I ask her if she believes in God, something I had been struggling with. She describes God in terms of Jesus, a being who is compassionate and forgiving – not the fire and brimstone, vengeful God who floods the earth and will eventually burn it down in the stories I am told by extended family members. Only once, when I am very young, do my mother and father mention God to me. They say that God measures the sins of adults as if they are children. I then interpret that to mean that the sins of children are measured as if they are adults and I find that concept terrifying. The ways Teresa describes God are comforting. We party after work. We go to the drive-in. She appears enchanted with me and transforms into a giggly school girl. And soon we are having a sexual relationship.

And then that school girl changes into the older woman who speaks to me in the same tone she speaks to her children. All the while saying to me that we are lovers. We work together, play together, go through my senior year in high school, and have sex. Our sex is never in question. But whenever Teresa and I are together and other males are around and they challenge what I say or do, Teresa expresses dissatisfaction with me. I once mention something about 'paternal instinct.' Another guy in the room overhears and questions whether paternal is actually a word and Teresa is very vocal in expressing that paternal is most certainly not a word and I do not know what I am talking about. In a discussion with a male clerk at a video rental store about Coen Brothers movies, I bring up Fargo. The clerk shoots a disagreeing look towards Teresa and shakes his head and Teresa gives the same look back at him and then at me and shakes her head and states that Fargo is not a Coen Brothers movie. I question what I know and am careful of what I say to avoid disapproval.

At first, having sex with Teresa increases my confidence through the roof. It is every teenage boy's wet dream to have sex with an older woman, isn't it? By the time I graduate from high school, I'm not sure that I don't have less confidence in myself than I did when I started high school. She's older and more experienced and I just assume that what she says and does is right. Plus we're having heavy, hot, dirty sex everywhere and in every position, more than I'm sure I would have with a girl my own age. After a few more years of working at the concert hall with Teresa, several co-workers start telling me that she is not good for me and that I need to get away from her.

I do move away and land a good job. I grow in my job and climb in position. I get good performance reviews. Often I am told by employers, co-workers, and friends that I need more confidence in myself and my abilities. I am aware that I do hesitate to speak for fear of being disapproved of. I don't know if this is due to Teresa or not. All I know is that I was young, full of hormones, and the sex was good.

Little Kids 'n Big Kids

HA

Jonny M

Jonny M was part of the Smart Class, and he was my first individual "best friend."

I guess what first drew Jonny and me together was our dedication to the neighborhood game of "squash," which actually was tennis played against a schoolyard wall appropriately marked with a white paint "net." As we both moved up in the Squash Hierarchy, we naturally began to spend more time together. An additional link was that our respective only sisters also had been friends, or at least acquaintances, a most unusual circumstance what with my sister being twelve years older than I. When we went to Junior High, Jonny was not in my class. (The system then was that the "home room" class moved through its daily subjects AS A GROUP. It wasn't until Senior High that there was individual programming. So either you had ALL your classes with someone, or else NONE of them.) Also, Jonny's family attended the Reform (Union) Temple, which my mother disparaged because of its connection with her estranged brother.

Nevertheless, Jonny and I became best friends. While one never really knows, of course, and it would not have occurred to us at the time, I believe the basis of our relationship was that WE BOTH LIKED KIDS. The official meeting place of our neighborhood "corner group" was The Schoolyard Steps, but that ritual assembly convened After Supper. In the afternoons, the steps were available for The Little Kids to play on, and those in the squash-playing coterie sat or stood Along the Fence, inside the schoolyard and elevated from the adjacent sidewalk by about four feet. Now, The Schoolyard Steps was a fully vertically integrated Corner Boys group, a la William Foote Whyte, and it was one of the central socializing institutions among young people on the block. It convened every night, weather permitting, except for the four or so coldest months.

Its structure was entirely informal, and entirely dictated by an interlocking set of conventions. The Littlest Kids were not allowed out After Supper at

all, except perhaps on very hot summer evenings, when they would orbit their parents in an Adult Sitting Group, perhaps now and then touching the periphery of the Steps group to annoy a sibling. Beyond them, there were the children who could come out After Supper When It Was Light Out. In effect, this meant that the Schoolyard Steps group began and ended its "season" with only Big Kids, because Daylight Savings Time then did not begin until the last Sunday in April, and terminated the last Sunday in September. After that, there was the expectable graded series of Have To Be In By times, which was adhered to quite strictly because the penalty for lateness was having one's mother yell out a window at the top of her lungs. This was a fate worse than death. In fact, I recall my mother and her friends mocking a certain Irene P for abusing this extreme measure, always shouting, "STEEEEEEEE-VENNNNN!" out her window. I believe her son, who was a bit older than I, was teased for this, and reacted with his own inappropriately boisterous behavior. Certainly this was only one small vicious cycle nestled within a whole deviancy producing complex. Anyway, the group broke up by 11:00 on school nights, and maybe an hour later on weekends and vacations, and I think by fourteen years old or so no one had a Be In By time anymore. In all the years I attended The Schoolyard Steps, there was always one acknowledged and uncontested leader, although he was never overtly "Chosen" in any way. I suppose he was always outspoken, relatively intelligent (although not necessarily the most intelligent), a good mediator and conciliator, and compassionate toward the younger kids. He was always a Senior in High School because everyone disappeared to college after that. And he was always a "he"; there were a few girls from time to time who participated, particularly on the younger end, but this was overwhelmingly a Boy activity. What the heck did all the girls do all those years' worth of evenings? Stay home? Meet at each other's houses? It never occurred to me to wonder. Then there would be either one or two "lieutenants" who filled in for the leader in his absence and who moderated subsidiary discussions when the conversation fragmented. At least one of these lieutenants was a year younger, and would simply accede to the leader role when it was vacated the next season.

Well, what I started out to say is that, in the afternoons, some of the Little Kids, who had maybe just started to attend the evening group, would try to

mimic it with their Even Littler friends over on the Steps. Looking back, I suppose they were practicing their leadership skills, and would have become the next generation of Schoolyard Steps Chieftains had the group survived past my own last year. Most often, they couldn't hold their rambunctious peers together very long, and they got frustrated and screamed a lot. Nobody paid any attention -- except Jonny and me. Sometimes, after playing squash, or while waiting our turn, we would go over and sit there, and the Little Kids would crawl over us like flies. Eventually they trusted us with their conflicts and with their secrets, first about their peers, later about their teachers and parents too. We mediated. We advised. We comforted. We LISTENED, with real interest and with respect. Of course, neither of us was "doing" this to any purpose; our empathy for these smaller people came as naturally to us as the other Big Kids' antipathy came to them. I'm not saying this happened all the time, but I know it happened repeatedly. I have a clear memory of sitting there in the middle of a middle step, with Jonny right up against me on my right, and some Little Kid* holding forth in his right ear while another gesticulated to me from my left on a completely different topic. I seem to remember our turning toward each other momentarily and just sharing a pleasant smile, basking both in the situation and in each other's company. I seem to remember walking Jonny home (he lived 1 ½ blocks away) after one of these sessions, with our arms around each other's shoulders, and both feeling very good. I also have an image of someone coming over behind us and shrilling, with a combination of perplexity and derision, "Why are you two always talking to these LITTLE KIDS?" I didn't know how to answer; I guess I felt a bit ashamed. My recollection is that Jonny and I held court there on the steps on and off from about the time I turned twelve until our own bond was broken shortly before I turned fifteen.

As I've already mentioned, I didn't go to camp the summers I was thirteen and fourteen. Having gotten enthusiastic about playing "real" tennis the previous summer. I found out that The City maintained real tennis courts, and that you could play on them for free if you had a Permit. Permits were required from April through October, and they were issued by the Parks & Recreation office. So one day in early April 1960 (Was it a Saturday? Did we take off school to go?), Jonny and I set off with our \$2.00 fees, birth certificates and passport-size photos to Deal With The Government. It was

clearly a first for both of us, and I think we each tried to appear much braver than we really felt. Funny, I can picture the office like a still from an old movie – yellowish walls and globe light fixtures, sun streaming through venetian blinds, linoleum floor and high wood counter. THANK GOD the clerk lady was nice to us, neither condescending-sweet nor functionary-nasty. We returned about an hour later with our yellow "New York City -- 1960 Junior Tennis Permit -- \$2.00," as proudly as though we had successfully "sued City Hall," an expression with which we were both long familiar from our families. Those permits had our pictures stapled on them, embossed with a raised seal, and a little box for every day of every month from April to October, which would be punched by the attendant when you used it. You know, I kept that first Permit in my special memorabilia box all my life, until it too went the way of all my material possessions. Jonny and I played a lot of tennis, both that year and the next. In 1961 the Junior Permits were blue. In September 1960, we all moved on to Senior High, Jonny to Erasmus and I to Brooklyn Tech. Meanwhile, I was increasing my involvement in U.S.Y., and also spending much time in Rockland County. Yet Jonny and I kept up our friendship, and I would have been hard put to choose between him and Danny B for "best friend" status. It was during this time that Jonny introduced me to the music of Tom Lehrer. I thought I had never heard anything so funny in my life. Here was an ADULT singing the kind of cynical, mocking, iconoclastic ditties that I thought only CHILDREN composed. I remember being in a baseball game when I was about nine, and Barry Roff, an only occasional visitor to "our" schoolyard, singing the Bosco song, modified as follows:

I hate Bosco, it's very bad for me,
Momma put it in my milk to try and poison me;
But I fooled momma, I put it in her tea,
And now there's no more momma, to try and poison me.

At that time, I found the thought quite disturbing, even sort of sacrilegious, but it appeared that All-The-Other-Kids, that granite standard against which Everything must be measured, were delighted. Were they ALL upset by Barry Roff crossing the mommy-line? Anyway, here was Tom Lehrer's first record, and although the very first song, "Fight Fiercely Harvard" didn't mean anything to us, the next one, "The Boy Scouts'

Marching Song" certainly did, even though neither of us personally had continued after Cub Scouts. It concludes:

Be Prepared, and be sure never to do
Your good deeds, when there's no one watching you;
If you're looking for adventure of a new and different kind,
And you run across a Girl Scout who is similarly inclined --
Don't be nervous, don't be flustered, don't be scared – BE
PREPARED!

Well, believe me, Jonny and I knew every word of every song on that record by heart in no time at all, and I retained those lyrics long after I had forgotten most of what I learned in my many years of schooling. Later, but when we were still together, a second record, "An Evening Wasted with Tom Lehrer," came out, and we memorized that one too. Coincidental, but of no real relevance, is that in Brooklyn, Tom Lehrer was almost the private property of Jonny and me, but when I got to Harvard, EVERYONE knew of him because he taught mathematics there. I believe he had a very rare joint appointment from Harvard and M.I.T., and people would attend his lectures to see if he might say something funny. He didn't. The student gossip was that he had been warned by the Administration that his humor career was incompatible with his academic aspirations, but that may be of no substance. In any case, after his stint composing for the American version of the T.V. show "That Was the Week That Was" (known by aficionados as TW3), and the recording it generated, he seemed to disappear from the counterculture scene, like so many others.

My friendship with Jonny M ended abruptly in December 1961. In fact, it ended on a particular wintry afternoon when we had been listening to Tom Lehrer's) new record in Jonny's bedroom and his mother had asked me to stay to dinner, which was not at all usual. I realize that in all of this I haven't described Jonny physically at all, and that's really not surprising because I didn't THINK of Jonny physically at all, neither in the intense, heart-thumping way like Marc R, nor in the peer-experimental way like Teddy and Danny. In the primary grades, Jonny had in fact been one of the smallest boys in the class, perhaps second only to Joel. He was still tiny and round-faced in fifth grade, when he and Judy S, who was also among the smallest, were one of the first "couples" in our cohort. I remember this

because Judy was Naomi's best friend, and I was both intensely jealous of Jonny and also wanting him to intercede with Judy to get Naomi to take an interest in me, although I'm not sure I ever had the guts, or the goal clearly enough formulated, to actually talk to him about it. Anyway, we were not yet close friends at that time. Be all that as it may, Jonny, although still small, reached puberty early, as I did, so by the time he and I were sitting on the Schoolyard Steps at twelve, he too was adolescent, and I remember, maybe a year after that, we frequently traded strategies in the Acne Wars. So I am a couple of months past 14 ½, and Jonny's about the same, or maybe he's turned 15 already, and it's an early-dark Winter afternoon with the radiator hissing and Tom Lehrer singing in Jonny's bedroom, and we're waiting for supper to be ready. We're talking about a time almost FORTY YEARS ago, and I'm so embarrassed I can hardly write this. I noticed that Jonny had an erection, not uncommon under any circumstances at fourteen, and I reached over and touched it. It felt good -- strong and hard and very like mine, which of course immediately stiffened in concert. I started to masturbate him, clothed. He was wearing black chinos. I think he said, "Why do you want to do this?" and I think I answered, "I just want to see what it feels like," which would have been the plain truth. Jonny reciprocated, but forty years later I can be honest enough to tell you that I knew his heart wasn't in it, and that I felt physically excited and emotionally disconcerted simultaneously. Jonny ejaculated in his pants and rose disgustedly, just as his mother called us to come eat. "Look, now my pants are all messed up; I'll have to put them in the wash; JUST A MINUTE MOM." We spoke little through dinner, and I left soon after. I won't say I never saw Jonny again after that, but it soon became clear that what I had broken I could not fix, and the relationship died. Despite feeling mightily guilty for initiating that sexual peccadillo, I was also hurt and confused by Jonny's catastrophic reaction. The irony did not escape me that, having jerked off or at least wanted to with more than a dozen acquaintances, big and small, this single orgasm which I saw as the result of boredom, overheating, and chronic teenage arousal, was losing me my best friend TO WHOM I WAS NOT IN THE LEAST DEGREE ATTRACTED. But that's how it was.

Danny

Danny and I did not have a sexual relationship. Although that doesn't mean we didn't engage in sexual behavior together, it was of a different quality than with any partner either before or after. Its beginning certainly was strange enough. The key here is that, although Danny was smaller than I, he was one of my few age-mates who was equally physically mature, and therefore I experienced no erotic attraction to him at all. One day (I think it was day), we were sitting around in his playroom, and he interrupted a silence with, "Hey, ya want to jerk off?"

I was speechless. As a sophisticated Junior High graduate and almost-Technite, I could talk pretty coolly about things like jerking off, but a blatant proposition I was not prepared for. God, none of the kids I WAS interested in ever said anything like that. I must have turned bright red before managing to stammer out, "No, not right now, I don't think so."

Well, I wasn't prepared for Danny at all. He said, "Well, I'm going to anyway," and proceeded to begin doing so. This was an extent of relationship risk I had never witnessed, and never would have come near daring myself. I was still at a stage where I could learn, however, and for years I would think back to that event and it would make me braver in broaching sexuality with someone I wanted to do it with, although I admit I never did get up to just whipping it out and starting. Well, of course I couldn't just let Danny sit there masturbating all by himself, and watching him was stimulating enough to get me started.

You know, I don't know if I have said this yet, or even if you want to hear it, but boys' penises are highly individuated. I've heard it said by others that they are as distinctive as fingerprints. This reminds me, for no really good reason, of a fourteen-year-old photographer I knew slightly many years later. He had produced a photograph of an old-fashioned pickle jar, perhaps centered among other canisters -- except that the "pickles" were all penises. It was a brilliant construction, but all the penes, although in different aspects, were the same, presumably his. Anyway, of all the appendages I had seen up to that time, and I think maybe even since, Danny Bleier's was the most like my own. That was particularly impressive at thirteen, as my being six feet tall rendered my six-plus inch

erection rather proportionate, while Danny must not have been more than about 5'5".

Danny and I had this kind of "cooperative" sexual liaison until we both graduated high school, at sixteen. He established the Rules of Engagement at the outset, and they were never modified. We would stimulate each other manually and orally, but only to the point of ejaculatory inevitability and never to the actual orgasm. Those last few strokes had to be delivered by oneself, and after a number of disappointing near-misses, we learned to make the transition seamless. One time, I believe it was New Years Eve of 1962, I decided to enjoy my climax and just didn't give the signal. Danny was quite angry, and made it clear that I had better not do that again. I offered to let him "come" too, but that did not pacify him. While we're on the peculiarities of what young people discover and don't discover about sex, I'll note that it was Danny who taught me the pleasure of anal stimulation during sex, which would have totally grossed me out, fastidious wretch that I was, if he hadn't peer-pressured me into trying it. However, he had not discovered the prostate at all, so that had to come much, much, literally decades, later.

Jack

Danny's bluntness about sex was new to me, and although it scared me a bit, I liked it. Sometime very soon after our first encounter, as we sat there stroking our newly-huge (by our own estimation) dicks, he said, "Have you done it with Jack yet," Well, Jack was another story altogether. While Danny's legs were hairy like mine, and he had acne, Jack's skin was smooth and soft, with just fine white hair on his arms, like I had had when I was about seven. At that time, he was right on the closing cusp of my range of attraction. Then there was the Catholic thing. He and his brother David, who was eight and just the then-opening cusp of my range, always seemed so CLEAN! Their house, even their rooms, were "immaculate," like something having to do with the conception of Mary. When Danny talked dirty, he kind of grabbed his lower lip with his top teeth, like he knew he was going to have to figure out some way of confessing this without really saying anything.

Danny told us these hilarious stories about his school and the priests and nuns, but the fact remained that HE WENT THERE. He had even been an altar boy, although I think he wasn't doing that anymore. There was one old prelate, he said, who was stone deaf, and at confession time, all the kids would try to line up at his booth because whatever you said, he would give you "Three times Hail Mary, three times Our Father" and absolve you. So of course the kids would vie with each other to be outrageous: "Forgive me Father for I have sinned. I slept with my mother and sister every night this week, and yesterday I fucked the Pope in the ass." "Three times Hail Mary, three times Our Father." It was so wonderfully naughty that I don't think either Danny or I ever questioned, even to ourselves, whether Danny REALLY said those things, or just made them up to impress his Jewish friends. Of course, the end of the story was always that one time the priests switched booths sub rosa and then there was Hell to pay, literally I suppose. But that always happened to somebody else, or in a different year or something. School apocrypha. Well, you would think that all this would have cracked my illusions about Jack, but nevertheless I was ambivalent. I was torn between my affiliation with Jack in the new adolescent sense of comradeship, and my attraction to him as "BOY." So when Danny asked if I'd done it YET with Jack, the implication was unmistakable. "Do YOU do it with him?" Danny had this way of screwing up his face, which was still pretty little and childlike, in a way that must have been driving his parents mad for ages, and that made me feel like about two cents. "Of COURSE" -- the "...you naive dolt" was left unsaid.

"Does he want to do it with me?"

"Yeah, I guess so. He asked me if I knew if you jerked off." So the next time I was with Jack in his playroom, he was sitting on a sofa leaning way back with his legs spread, and I was in a chair addressing him at right angles. I started lightly tickling his tan chinos, noticing the swelling between his narrow hips. I wished I could have been as direct as the other Danny, but I just wasn't born brave. Anyway, stroking his thigh was pretty nice in itself. Danny's response was to spring up with, "Let me go check that David's asleep." This was just the most routine thing in the world. How come all these other kids are so COMFORTABLE with their sexual

activity, and it's me that's nervous and trembly and scared as if I were getting ready to rob a bank?

What do I remember? His skin was tan, and his underpants were almost blindingly white. Jack had plentiful light curly hair around the base of his penis and up on to his pubis, but almost none on his scrotum. This went along with what I expected from his face and skin, but was contradicted by the size of his erection, which was JUST LIKE OURS. I recognize this now as Tanner Stage 3b, but it was tremendously exciting to me then. I soon found out that he had a full, forceful ejaculation like we did also. At first, we followed the "Danny rules" which we each assumed the other had taken over from Danny, but I think eventually we got to masturbating each other to orgasm, although we never completed our oral sex in that way. I don't know if it was just his extreme cleanliness, or his sequence of maturation, or something else, but Jack never acquired the "scent of maturity" that eventually became inhibitory for me with the Danny. Once, David, then nine, wandered quietly down the stairs and almost caught us. I thought Jack would die. Afterwards, I queried him, "Don't you think David would like to do it too. Don't you think he's big enough now?"

Jack answered, "I KNOW he'd like to do it. He plays with his boner. But he would TELL. Sooner or later, he'd let it slip out; he just can't keep any secrets." As one who never had a brother, I had to yield. With more church and family activities, Jack wasn't as consistently available as was Danny, but my relationship with him combined the comradely with the erotic, and made our sexual encounters particularly fulfilling. Jack and his family moved just when I was turning 15, and I never saw him again.

I recall one time when I was bedded down with Danny when we were both fully developed – Tanner Stage 4b. We were both pretty stimulated from a lot of the social interaction and excitement, but probably for somewhat different reasons: Danny having met a whole new group of quite attractive girls, and I having spent time with a boy I was fond of. I took particular pleasure in Danny's fellating me that night, although, as always stopping short of orgasm. When I took Danny's erection into my mouth, it was rock-hard and perceptibly throbbing. His arousal further aroused me, and I actually felt something more EMOTIONAL, more PERSONAL, than I was accustomed to with him, or with any physically mature male. I began

stroking his abdomen, playing with his pubic hair and testicles. For once I really wanted to pleasure him. Then I could feel his hardness stiffening even more, and he said, "Get off, quick, I can't hold it. If you don't get off now you're going to get a mouthful of scum." I repeat all this detail because it was a critical moment. I loved Danny. He was my best friend. I was stimulated almost to the point of climax myself, and I wanted intensely to complete that act of giving. Ultimately, what caused me to desist and permit Danny to ejaculate into the air was olfactory. As he neared orgasm, I was engulfed in a cloud of male sexual scent, and in the second or two of acute decision, that sensation tilted the balance. I believe it was that night, and in the consideration of it afterward, that I learned on the gut level, that whatever my compelling orientation toward boys was, what it definitely WASN'T was some nascent or practice form of homosexuality.

During the remainder of that year, which was our Senior Year of high school, I saw less of Danny, mainly because my very heavy involvement in U.S.Y. occupied most of my weekends. The summer following, we both worked at Candy Mountain, but he was with a little kids' group and I was with the second oldest boys. We got together some at nights and weekends, but he was driving by then and had made other friends. The last time I saw Danny, other than in passing, was during Christmas vacation (excuse me, "Winter Recess") of our first year at college. I had a cast on my leg. We were up in his room, I guess both trying to figure out what to say. I made a half-hearted sexual overture, with no great motivation behind it, and Danny's response was, "Nah, I don't do that anymore --ya know, I've been 'dipping the of wick' now and then at school." I countered come it faut with, "Yeah, me neither -- I just thought for old times' sake...." And that was that. And it was true, as far as it went, that for me that relationship was *suis generis* -- a pretty typical "adolescent homosexual experimentation" in a person whose primary bonding orientation is other than homosexual. A broad based friendship that dips into sexuality as sharing, learning, exploring, a running over of surging pubertal hormones and almost continual arousal. It's just that we're used to viewing such comradeships against the background of an emerging HETEROSEXUAL adult orientation, as indeed was the case with Danny. My situation was atypical only by having been superimposed on a fitfully coalescing

primary orientation toward children, which preceded it, coexisted with it, and remained after both Danny and Jack had moved into my past.

Oscar

From the first time I saw Oscar, I couldn't take my eyes off him. He was, I imagine, average size for his age, not overweight, but not wraith-like like so many kids. Light flawless skin, roundish face, sandy hair; impeccably dressed and groomed. Later, I would observe to myself that Oscar always looked like a miniature banker. Did he at one period wear a watch on a gold chain tucked into his vest pocket? I think he might have -- something about its being from his grandfather. But aside from physical characteristics, there was an aura about Oscar, a radiance I had not previously encountered. He exuded a unlikely combination of spontaneous exuberance and uninterrupted serenity that I perceived subsequently only during a few very brief interviews with two renowned Hasidic Rebbes. I think it may be hinted at also in the expression of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

The last analogy is not casual. I approached Oscar with awe, as a supplicant. I believed then, and perhaps still do now, that his unselfconsciousness was of a different order than that of other children -- it bore not the pure experiential quality of naivete, but the "presence" of highly conscious detachment. I began to read about gurus and incarnations, and especially about Buddhism. I discovered the Dalai Lama, himself then still a young man, and in the story of his birth and discovery I resolved any mixed feelings I might have harbored about Oscar's juniority. I accepted Oscar as a bodhisattva, as MY bodhisattva. No sacrilege intended, and none experienced, I worshipped Oscar -- not as a god, God forbid, but as an embodiment of divine effulgence, a perfect "ki'li," vessel, proximity to whom would cause all good things to spill over on to my own poor corrupt soul. I choose this language because those are the very terms in which I thought of Oscar then, at fourteen and fifteen. I was crazy in love. I learned a lot about Buddhism. I remember sitting in sophomore English class that first Spring surreptitiously reading a Public Library book on my lap and getting caught. Looking back, I suppose that teacher already felt suspicious of me after I had chosen James Michener's Hawaii for a book report and my mother had to write, or go in or something to

affirm that she knew I was reading dirty stuff like that. Anyway, I'm sure that rather nasty woman was sure she'd caught me this time, and was nonplussed when it turned out I was cribbing some technical tome on the differences between Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism.

It's hard enough for me to convey my own part of this relationship, but nearly impossible to set down what was so unique about Oscar himself. He did not "glom on" to me as a younger boy who was needy or flattered by my obsequious attention, nor did he reject or mock my dedication to him. His attitude was one of good-natured and good-humored acceptance -- as it was I believe toward everything in his life, even his pesky younger sister Ann. I saw his room; I don't think he ever saw mine. I dropped him off (walking) every Sabbath after services, and we would take leave with "Oscar la vista," his invention, and a laugh. Oscar's laugh, while not excessive, was TOTAL, like I imagine that of a Sufi master. When Oscar succeeded me at Lefferts Junior High, he complained that he was "the only kid in the school who could never write his name on the bathroom wall."

There just weren't any other Oscars in our "generation." There's that laugh again, the eyes gleaming -- a prescient appreciation of the absurdities of life.

Outside of BJC and later USY activities, I can't remember doing anything with Oscar except once. In my Senior Year, we used to get deeply discounted tickets to Broadway shows through the English department. They were generally \$1.00, and good, for instance, only on Tuesday nights. What fun that was, to get all dressed up (no one would have considered attending the theater without coat and tie or a dress back then) and meet my confreres in mid-town Manhattan. After the show, we would go to Toffinetti's or some other notable landmark for coffee and dessert, and then take the train back to Brooklyn. This was an incredible Adventure in Adulthood. Anyway, I managed to take Oscar along on one of those trips, over my mother's vigorous objections ("What will your friends think, you bringing A LITTLE BOY along?" "Oscar's NOT a LITTLE BOY, ma, and he's SO COOL, everybody'll like him.") I'm not sure, but "What Makes Sammy Run?" comes to mind. Of course, Oscar was an instant hit, fitting in effortlessly with a bunch of High School Seniors he'd never seen before -- but by then I would have expected nothing less.

I saw Oscar naked exactly once, when he was thirteen and we were swimming at the Center on a Sunday afternoon. Bathing suits there were not allowed; something about lint in the filters, although I can't imagine that being worse than pubic hairs. He was more mature than I had thought, about Tanner Stage 3b, his penis compact but not thin, his pubic hair sandy like that on his head. Even naked, Oscar was more a very young specimen of "man," than "boy," or even "adolescent." I was not aroused. I have contemplated over the many years why I initiated no sexual contact with Oscar, and never even considered doing so. It wasn't because I thought sex was shameful, because I didn't, but because I knew it was CARNAL, and therefore had no connection with Oscar, either in my thoughts or in my feelings. Oh yes, he joked about masturbating, but with such -- again the word -- detachment, that I regarded his beating off as though it were some sort of tantric attainment, certainly not something in which I would include myself.

Larry

Oscar introduced me to his best friend, Larry. Larry was a small, sturdy, dark-haired boy who may have been even fractionally younger than Oscar. During our Sunday swimming pool times, I enjoyed spending time in the sauna and the steamroom, both of which were directly adjacent to the pool. I think the adults wisely avoided Sunday afternoons in general, and very frequently we kids had the hot rooms to ourselves. One day, Larry came in and sat beside me on a steam radiator. I noticed immediately that he was one of those relatively rare just-prepubertal kids who have very substantial penile growth before any visible pubic hair. This was accentuated by the fact that he was looking directly at my groin while stroking his relatively huge erection, relative to his size. I made some appropriate comment about his being almost as big as mine, and he responded with something like, "Yeah? Let me get yours hard." Well, it didn't take any more than his saying that to accomplish the task, and then we were gently masturbating each other.

I was terrified that someone would walk in and told Larry so. He said, "That's no problem. Look," and with that sprung up and under the cold shower which was on one side and activated by a chain. Of course, his body leaping there was preceded by a spear-like boner, but it was clear he

just didn't care. I was both scared and immensely excited. I further remonstrated, "What about when, you know, when the STUFF comes out?" Not fazed a bit, Larry reached behind him (where?) and produced two small paper cups. One cannot say he came unprepared.

Anyway, the end of this escapade was that I did not achieve orgasm with Larry. I can't remember exactly, but I guess my fear overcame my desire. I managed to get him over to my apartment on an afternoon after school one day not long after, arranging through Oscar some pretense of helping him with a school assignment. However, I was shocked and terribly disappointed to find that he really did just want to work on his paper. Following his so open and persistent sexual engagement in the steamroom, I couldn't believe he wasn't interested. I guess I didn't understand then, or for a long time after, just how "facultative" sex is for children who have not yet been swept away in the pubertal flood of hormones. And that was it for Larry, but the main reason I described this episode in detail is that there is no doubt at all that Oscar knew all about it. In retrospect I am not without suspicion that he actually set it up, offering his friend to me as a sexual favor in place of himself, out of altruism, or just for the joy of it.

Lloyd

Lloyd lived in the apartment immediately above ours. He looked a little like Oscar, but thinner and fairer. I could hear his mother calling him to practice his piano lessons, but he wasn't very good at it. He and his younger brother Jay shared the bedroom above mine, and by my mid-teens I used to fantasize about what they might do together there, and I tried to unsuccessfully rig up all kinds of listening devices. I had no ambivalence about wanting sex with Lloyd, and he's the first kid I remember carefully observing the little bulge in front of his impossibly narrow pants and trying to catch the slightest hint of what might lie within. The Jewish Center was a tremendous warren of hiding places, especially on the Sabbath, and if I could just get Lloyd to walk with me and get there early, there would be plenty of time and place for a bit of intimate play before the prayers. Well, I did get Lloyd to accompany me a few times, but the early morning walk of about a mile and a half was too much for him. He certainly wasn't interested in the religion, and I just never felt

RELATED enough to him to actually' make any sexual overture. It was a fizzle.

Bobby

Bobby was pretty typical twelve physically -- as tall and slim and well-shaped as a juvenile body gets before it starts to change. His walk to Junior Congregation was even a couple blocks further than mine, but I think with his Bar Mitzvah approaching he was under pressure to attend. I began meeting him on the way to services, and also walking him home, sometimes after dropping Oscar. Bobby liked to talk about his girlfriend, and I naturally encouraged him. Sex talk was always fun, and especially stimulating when it was with someone to whom I was attracted and wanted to picture in sexual situations. I knew that adventures with such "girlfriends" were generally wildly exaggerated accounts of real events, if they were not fantasies created out of whole cloth.

Right before his birthday, Bobby turned to me one Saturday on the way home and said, "A, can I tell you a secret?"

"Of course Bobby."

(Whispering:) "I'm not a virgin anymore."

This was going too far. I knew what a virgin was, and although I wasn't sure you could really apply tile term to boys, I knew that if you could, I was one, and likely to remain one, for all the success I had had in with my occasional halting forays into heterosociality. Now here I was looking at this beautiful boy-face that I wanted to touch so badly, wanted to touch WITH MY LIPS, wanted to open those pants and see a pointy hardness tenting the front of his briefs -- and here he was trying to convince me he'd done it WITH A GIRL!.

"Bobby, you don't even know what a virgin is. And anyway, boys can't be virgins."

He looked hurt. Why was I yelling at him when he'd told me something so important? "Yes they can. It's -- you know -- when you never fucked a girl." He stumbled slightly on the still unaccustomed obscenity. "Well, my girlfriend and I (he used her name, but I can't recall it) DID IT last night when we were babysitting."

I tried to maintain my air of aloof cynicism, but internally I was in turmoil, caught between doubt and curiosity. If he was putting me on, I didn't want to be a chump, but what if he'd really DONE IT? "Come on, tell me what happened. Did you actually PUT IT IN?"

"Yeah. Why? Haven't you done it, A?"

That effectively put me on the defensive, and I had to end with, "OF COURSE. What do you think?" and let it drop.

I didn't know about juvenile and adult orientations then, nor about definitive turns toward heterosexuality, but I knew how I'd lost Steven and all my original cohort of playmates. I sensed that whether or not Bobby was lying, his statement had opened a gulf between us that I would never cross. In retrospect, I think he was telling the truth. 1) He blushed deeply when he said it, and looked away. 2) He refused to supply any details, despite my annoyed questioning. This was not at all boy-like, and suggests that there really was a "personal" relationship between him and his girl. 3) He did in fact begin to pull away from me after then, and from the Junior Congregation, and soon disappeared from my life altogether. I wouldn't be surprised if Bobby married his childhood sweetheart and they are right now happily enjoying their many cute grandchildren. I hope so.

Ronny

I had read a couple of books on hypnosis, so on the bus up to camp one summer, I hypnotized a boy named Ronny. The other kids, having attained the age of scepticism (which in Jewish circles, lacking Santa Claus, is about six), asserted that he was faking. To demonstrate my expertise, I had Ronny let me give him a boner, and then play with it through his unzipped fly (but still covered by underwear), giving anyone who wanted a turn to touch. This removed any doubt whatever about the authenticity of my skill. Imagine my surprise later when Ronny let me know that he HAD been faking, and had been fully present to enjoy all that stimulation. I am impressed in retrospect that this public display of sexual play among total strangers elicited neither shock nor disapproval from any of this busload of six-to-sixteen y/o's, and as far as I know not one of them ever said a word about it any adult. As children, we lived in a children's world, with its own conventions and sanctions. That world intersected that of adults at

certain times and places, and in certain defined interactions. Intergenerational relationships that were anything but pro forma, "gateways" so to speak, existed, but were few and far between. Otherwise, the two worlds merely co-existed, superimposed upon each occupying the same space in a kind of ghostly ectoplasmic mutual obliviousness.

Bobbie

Bobby illustrates, in my memory, how frank and accepted and how quotidian our sexuality was as children -- and, although never revealed to adults, how open it was among ourselves. Bobby S was in Bunk 11, one of the "new" bunkhouses. He was small, pre-pubescent, dark complexioned, intelligent and full of spunk. I went straight for him, and we spent a lot of time together playing tennis. He had little white tennis shorts, which I thought were the sexiest thing I had ever seen. Most of my "tennis" experience was against a schoolyard wall in Brooklyn, but motivated by my desire to please and impress Bobby, I adapted quickly.

Bobby liked me. It seems incredible in the context of today's screwed up world, but one day he came over and said, quietly but sans preliminary, "You want to jerk off together?"

I: "Yeah, sure. I didn't even know you did it."

He, with that priceless child disdain: "Of course, A, EVERYBODY does it."

Then we got down to business about how to set up such a rendezvous. In the end the obstacles proved insurmountable and the meeting never took place, and that was no big deal either. Sex was for us a pinnacle, but it was not sui generis, it rested rather atop a whole pyramid of "simple pleasures," exciting in proportion with their difficulty of attainment, but not either shameful or very complicated.

As a sort of aside, the tennis part of my story with Bobby S also is significant in foreshadowing the unfolding of my life. Bobby was so cute and so charming that not only I loved him, but also the tennis counselor, a squat man named Leslie. Leslie definitely did not love me, although in his defense I guess I should admit that I was a gawky adolescent who

stumbled rather than glided around the court, and undoubtedly arrogant WAY beyond my twelve years. Bobby and I used to joke about Leslie.

When we two were the finalists in the "Twelve-and-Under" tennis tournament, we opted to make our own calls. I know it doesn't always work this way, but our competition never affected our friendship. When we played, each could be expected predictably to call ambiguous shots in the other's favor – and sometimes shots that weren't so ambiguous. I think it drove Leslie crazy to come upon Bobby and me having a shouting contest about a call – each arguing AGAINST himself. Anyway, the grand final was, I think, two out of three sets. I won the first one, and was ahead in the second. That was when Leslie decided, over both our protests, to take over judging. In brief, he made a series of bad calls, and threw the match to Bobby. Bobby was so angry that he left the court crying, and we walked all the way back to the bunk area with my arm around his shoulders, I comforting HIM.

Arnie

Arnie was the cry-baby of Bunk 13. He was perhaps a little small for twelve, maybe "elevenish," thin, with curly light hair. It's peculiar that over the whole summer, I felt no sexual stirring toward him, but later, in retrospect, his memory provided many a masturbation fantasy, combined with angry regret that I had never played with Arnie when I had the chance. I think it may be a case of objectionable behavior having overwhelmed eroticism.

Arnie had two favorite expressions: When having made some egregious error in softball (he played second base and I pitched), like letting the ball roll between his feet, he would respond to the team's exasperation by placing his gloved hand on his non-existent hip and intoning, "It's only a GAME." It seems to me now that in other times and places, Arnie would have been tormented as a "fag," but that sobriquet just wasn't common among my peers, either at home or at camp, at least until senior high school.

Arnie's other triumph was that when he was pissed off, he would preface his remarks with, "No offence but...," and then proceed to be VERY offensive. Looking back, I think Arnie was a needy kid, who felt that we

all were beyond him, which in some ways we were, and that he probably wound up having a lousy summer.

On the last day of camp, his seven bunkmates attacked Arnie, with the introductory statement of, "No offence, ARNIE, but...," followed by a non-injurious, but I'm sure very frightening pummeling. Arnie started to cry quite promptly, thus opening the door for one wag to add the coup de grace, "Why Arnie, IT'S ONLY A GAME." Did I actually hit Arnie? In all honesty, I don't remember. It doesn't matter, really, because I didn't come to his defense. I at least think I said, "Leave him alone now, he's crying," but I might well be imagining that too. Sorry, Arnie, I hope the rest of your life has been better than that summer at Boiberik.

Our Hearts Make Up Our Wants As We Go Along

PS

Mickey

Off to the mess hall we must go, that is if we want to eat. I skipped breakfast not because I don't want it or I'm not hungry, but because it's so hard to get going, to want to get going, to be forced to mingle with others who have not even brushed their teeth, or combed their hair – some wearing what they slept in (disgusting). Neither my mind nor spirit can cope with such.

The seating is by what you are: White, Black, Hispanic, Native, Jewish or Muslim – or a Mighty Whitey or a sex offender. I, and many others here, fall into the last of the last category. We are 80% of the population here so we have a limited number of seats. Many times we stand waiting for one of our fellow comrades to finish their meal so we may take our turn.

Hopefully, a good seat becomes available and you're not stuck between Mr. Elbows or The Fatman. You might get lucky and the person or persons beside you may have showered before they came to the meal. An end seat at the table is best. That way you only have one person next to you, and the one across from you. Each housing unit is called in rotation, thus going one place later each week until you reach first again. At times it's a race to get there – but don't run: running is not allowed – all so you can attempt to get a seat so you don't have to choke down your meal. Not that the food is all that scrumptious. Fact is I'm not going tonight: rice, chicken fajitas (that chicken of unknown origin with these paper-thin wraps and salsa sauce), corn, and water to drink. I'll stay back and have a Ramen soup (\$.25) and hopefully avoid salmonella.

The mess hall is where I first met Mickey, if you consider sitting next to someone as having met them. Mickey was one of "those," meaning those you really don't want to sit next to. He looked disheveled: his white T-shirt was almost light brown, his hair was not combed, and his arms were covered with pus-oozing red sores, which he would sometimes scratch and dig in between mouthfuls of food. He piled food on top of food on his tray even though he did not eat it all. But the thing that stuck with me the most about him was the sores on his arms. That's how I knew "Mickey." I did not know his name, nor did I ever speak to him, not even a little hello.

Looking back all I can say is I feel so much shame. It's why I will never forget "Mickey." I could have been his friend. I always envied "Mickey" because he always sat at the end of the table. What a selfish bastard I must really be. I saw "Mickey" outside walking around and at the library but never, not once, did I offer a hello.

I heard about the murder after we came off lock-down. Someone described him to me. I couldn't place him until I mentioned the guy with the sores on his arm, and I was told, yes, that was him. I went to his memorial service here at the Chapel. They had a picture of him at the front of the room and when I saw it, knowing how he suffered and died, I cried. I cried for him and I cried for me out of shame for how I judged that man who was and is no different than me. I guess he only had a brother left for family, and he did not want Mickey's body, so the government buried him here in Tucson, I believe. That too rocks me to my core. It's why I'll never forget Mickey. He may have been a nobody but he was somebody. We all are.

When Life Is Not Worth Living Anymore

In God we trust. Do we? These words are found on our nation's currency and on the walls behind our judges as well as in many many more places.

How can we as a nation that's supposed to be trusting in God condone laws that permit killing another human being? If taking another's life is murder, manslaughter etc., and against the law, how can our government, our leaders support the death penalty? Or support and fund the killing of human life through abortions?

Does not every life have meaning or purpose? Apparently not.

I don't want to die, but to live can be a kind of death itself.

This writing is dedicated to the memory of Michael D. McCullough – Mickey – whose voice has been forever silenced. No one will ever hear Mickey laugh again or cry, nor see his smile. Not wanted by his family, his body was left to the Federal Bureau of Prisons to be disposed of in unknown soil far from home. He will never have anyone kneel at his grave nor say prayers over him, he will be forgotten, just a drifter through time, faded so that even memories of him will cease to be. Does anyone care? Probably not.

December 2015, exactly one week before Christmas, it was a Friday. A joyful season for most. Even Mickey, I'm sure, was making the best of it as could be. I'm sure he did not expect what happened to him, the details of which are forever seared into my being and put a new perspective on

the meaning of fear. Mickey was beaten savagely. They say he probably would not have survived the beating, but that was not enough, he was also sexually assaulted and ultimately had his head pulled back while his throat was slit with a razor. No human being deserves to die in this manner. Nor should any human being have to live with the thought each day of such a haunting death. Whatever Mickey's crimes against society were he did not deserve to have his life end in such a manner.

Unlike Mickey, I still have one person in this world who still cares about me: my mom. She is 84 years old and like me, she is in an institution for the unwanted. Her's is called a nursing home. Because of me she lost the family home of over 55 years which contained generations of memories and memorabilia. Our home, our place of being, stands as an empty shell today, the lives it raised scattered like the wind. Because of the length of sentence I have, 42 years, and that I'm being housed almost 2,500 miles away, I will never see my mom again, never be able to feel her loving embrace, touch her cheek, see her smile. Still with all that's happened she stands by me and has never forsaken me.

I have one full brother three years older than me. We share the same mother and father. He will not speak to me. I have another brother, oldest, different dad, he keeps his distance from the family. I have two sisters, one estranged from the family, the other stops in weekly to see my mom and get her what she needs and take her places, but she still does not speak to me.

I have two daughters by my first marriage. The oldest is 33, and the youngest 30. They both have now stopped talking to me. Their addresses have been changed as well as their phone numbers. My second wife and I have three boys together, who now would be 27, 26 and 25 years old. I went to prison in 1992. The three boys were adopted off. I have never seen them since. My last daughter is 20 years old. My oldest daughter told me before she broke contact with me that she had found her on Facebook and she was going to college. I have never met this last child of mine. I don't even know what she looks like. All I know is she has never reached out to see who her dad is and probably never will. This is my legacy. My hopes, my dreams and aspirations were not the life of regrets I now live. Those dreams of tomorrows have been erased from time forever, never to be. The torment of the mind has become the future. The fear to live has given death a slightly welcoming embrace.

I cannot bear the thought of not having at least my mom there who cares, even though she is in a nursing home. My mom will make sure I – unlike Micky – am at least brought home. She won't forget me or forsake me. I

may be selfish to think this way and it's not fair to my mom who has been through so much already. The perils and hurt need to end somewhere. Did my crime of having and trading in child pornography deserve what amounts to be a life sentence? Did Mickey's?

If God is an all-forgiving God like he's supposed to be, I think I will take my chances with Him and die with some dignity and while someone out there still cares.

Will God Let Me In Heaven If I End My Life

Just having to exist with such thoughts each day is a living hell of its own. When, if at all, are one's sins truly forgiven? I have been told that taking one's own life is a sin itself, yet are there not exceptions?

Lock yourself in a room for one hour with no distractions, no other sensory interactions other than your very own racing thoughts. Focus on yourself, your life, do this for one hour and try to count the number of different thoughts you have. Now, think about doing this 24 hours a day. Day after day for the rest of your life.

The mind is a terrible place to be alone in. The silence is more deafening than a thousand bombs exploding. Here I sit wondering if there is a heaven will God let me in? How much difference can there be from hell and the life I am now forced to live? You cannot comprehend the feelings of having every single thing you care about taken from you forever; your life goes on with only the memories to torment you day after day. This is torture, it is not punishment. It may deter future crimes, but at what cost? Crime is a product of society, let me say that again: crime is a product of society. For every action there is a reaction.

When I look around me I don't see no normal or abnormal. I see beautiful and ugly and loving and hateful and helpful and dangerous, but not normal or abnormal. These are life killing words. Those are words narrow people use to try to put life in a little box because it's too big and unruly for them to accept on its own terms. Normal or abnormal? Pah! Show me an abnormal mountain.

From "A Galaxy of No-Stars by Jay Edson – pg. 190

There should be no gay nor straight nor pedo nor bi. We should be able to live according to what our hearts tell us. Our hearts make up our wants as we go along, whether we like them or not. To demand that we deny the feelings of the heart is like asking us to live without a heart at all. I am categorized and condemned by society as a pedophile – a child molester, monster, and other vile names – names that tell me I am not worthy of life

itself. We should not be categorically condemned for life by such name calling.

I never have jumped out of the bushes, trolled the neighborhood looking for little kids to snatch, nor stalked playgrounds or beaches or any park. I am not gay, yet the labels suggest even boys are not safe from my vile touch.

I love little girls, their beauty their innocence their charming ways, their unconditional acceptance. I do not love them to hurt them. I no more want to see a little girl cry than anyone else does. I'd rather comfort them, make them smile, laugh and, most of all, feel wanted and accepted without shame nor guilt for feeling something that is natural. But society says that my behavior is abnormal and because of this gives me a sentence of 40 years – equal to life in prison – because I am what I am. There is no cure for unconditional love. So they take away my life, my family, and all that I have. After all, I'm abnormal. Is the trans-gender person normal? Is the lesbian normal? Is the homosexual person normal? Why can I not be accepted too?

Drummer Boy

MD

I was conceived as the result of a one-night-stand my mother had with an older man when she was seventeen. My biological father didn't want to have anything to do with me. Shortly after I was born, Mom married Virgil Newquist, who legally adopted me.

Early Memories

My first actual memory was being on an airplane, standing on a seat and looking out the window. It was when I was about two years old, and we were flying back from Hawaii to California. Mom insists I couldn't remember that, but I distinctly recall watching the clouds outside the window. We stayed with my mom's parents in Oakland for awhile. Over the years, I'd end up staying with "Grandma and Grandpa" quite often.

Some of my earliest memories are of Mom dating various guys. Most of them didn't get past the first date, so I didn't get to know them. One thing Mom wanted to be sure of was that the men she dated knew about me, and accepted the fact that she had a son, so, the first thing she would do was have them come to our house to pick her up... and then have me answer the door and greet them. Since I've always been a very sociable person, I enjoyed this immensely. I got so I'd ask Mom if she was "having a new friend come over." I don't remember what most of them were like. But, I especially remember one of them. I was around four years old. One night, I opened the door to see a slightly balding man who introduced himself as "Joe." The first thing he did was pick me up and give me a big hug, while sort of rubbing his fingers on my thigh. I thought Joe was pretty neat, and told Mom she should marry him - before they'd gone out on their first date!

Mom and Joe did date for quite awhile. In hindsight, I'm sure it was more because of me than because of her. Joe lived quite a ways away, and always wanted Mom to bring me with her when she drove out to see him. I eagerly looked forward to those visits. First of all, Joe always had a nice toy for me... like a Tonka fire truck, with a working ladder. As soon as we got there, he'd have Mom do something (make drinks, I think). Then, he'd tell me to look in his bedroom closet, where the toy would be. After I'd find it, I'd start playing with it on his bed, while Joe would give me a back-rub. On one occasion, Mom left me with Joe to go do something (a job interview, I believe). That was the day he gave me the fire truck. I was happily playing with it while Joe gave me his usual backrub. I told him it

felt good, and he said he could do something that would feel even better... if I would take my clothes off. I remember thinking it was strange to get undressed in the middle of the day. But, I've never been shy and I was curious to find out what he was going to do. I stripped down to my underwear, and went back to playing, while he rubbed me all over. I don't remember everything he did, but I do remember him kissing me in various places... which I thought was "silly." Suddenly, he practically yelled for me to hurry and get dressed. He was helping me put my shirt on, when Mom walked in, and asked what we were doing. For some reason, I knew she would be mad at Joe if she knew what had been going on. So, I told her my shirt was backwards, and Joe was fixing it for me.

To this day, I don't know if Mom knew about the "attention" her boyfriend bestowed upon me. A few times, over the years, I've asked about him. She'd just say they "weren't a good match." The last time I mentioned him, a few years ago, Mom said that Joe didn't "treat me right." I've often wondered what my life would have been like if Mom had married him. After all, he was wealthy. And quite affectionate, toward me, anyway.

When I first met Dale, I absolutely doted on him. Every time he came to see Mom, he'd play and roughhouse with me. He was in the Navy and would be away for days at a time. Whenever that happened, I had a special calendar on my wall with the date he was scheduled to return circled. Often, Mom and I would meet his plane at the base. As soon as the plane landed, Dale would get off and run over to us. After giving Mom a big hug and kiss, he'd put me up on his shoulders for the walk to the car. Mom and I lived with her parents in San Lorenzo, California, before Mom and Dale got married. I can remember looking out the living room window at Christmas to see Dale, armed with presents, coming up the walk.

The first rift between the two of us began shortly after they were married. Dale's stepfather had lost the fingers of his right hand in a farm equipment accident, so we moved to Gooding, Idaho. The reason for this was so that Dale could help with his stepfather's business - hiring out himself and various pieces of farm equipment to farmers needing help. The business turned out to be not very profitable, and Dale soon became quite irritable. It seemed like I kept doing things to set him off. We'd gotten a border collie that we named "Tippy". Not long after, Tippy became pregnant. Dale built her a nice, large doghouse out of bales of hay. I decided it would make a great fort and wound up making a hole in part of the roof, so I could slide down into it. The result was the first time I can recall Dale hitting me with his belt. It would not be the last.

It soon got to the point that the sound of a belt buckle would cause terror to run through me. One of the worst early beatings that I can remember was when I had found a pair of my mother's panties, and put them on. I really liked the feel of them, and I put my jeans on over them. They were so big, they stuck out of the top of my pants. Dale saw them, and went livid. After ordering me to take them off, he beat me while I was naked. To this day, I can hear what he said while hitting me: "I'm going to beat the pansy out of you!" It wasn't until years later that I'd understand what that meant.

There were a few good times. Dale taught me how to play chess. He didn't believe in "letting" me win, and he was very good. So, I became pretty adept at the game. Because Dale and Mom didn't know many people in Gooding, they taught me how to play three-handed pinochle (at just five years old). Over the years, when we were getting along, we played a lot of pinochle, and I became very good at that as well.

After about a year, things got so bad we had to sell almost everything we owned... including a peddle-car fire engine that Grandma and Grandpa had bought for me. We then moved to Nevada. Dale had found a job as a mechanic at a gas station in Reno. We moved to a large housing development outside of Reno that had once been an Air Force base, called "Stead." It was in Stead (I always loved to say that) where I first started attending school on a regular basis (I'd attended a couple of nursery schools).

Even though I was bright (I was reading "Tom Swift" when the other kids were on "Dick and Jane"), I did not like school. Mostly, I didn't care for my teacher. She had made a paper lion's tail. If she thought someone was fibbing, she'd pin the tail on the back of our pants, and make us hold a sign during recess that read, "I'm not a lion, I'm a liar." One day, we kids were having a snowball fight at recess. I threw a snowball that I must have packed too tightly. I hit a girl with it... who told the teacher I'd put a rock in it. When I insisted I hadn't, the teacher pinned the tail to my pants, and made me hold the sign. I was absolutely humiliated. Worse than that, she sent a note home with me - which caused Dale to beat me.

Later, I told Mom about the tail. She was livid, and went to my school to confront my teacher. After that day, the tail was never seen again. However, after that, it seemed like the teacher looked for every excuse to use her new punishment on me... making me stand in the corner.

Besides lying, the teacher's other pet peeve was being "tardy" for school. There was a long path - at least a half mile long - from the housing area to the school. Ten minutes before time to start, a teacher would blow a

whistle to tell stragglers that they'd better hurry up. Every time I was late (which was all too often) my teacher would notify my parents... invariably leading to a beating from my stepfather.

As I grew older, Dale seemed to find more and more things to punish me for. Often, small things would escalate into big things. For instance, I absolutely detested soft-boiled eggs. One morning, Mom made them for breakfast. I refused to eat mine. At first, Dale told me I would sit at the table until I did. After more than an hour had passed, Dale abruptly hit me on the side of my head, knocking me off my chair. This kind of treatment continued for many years.

The most severe beating happened when I was about thirteen. I had developed a painful limp in my left leg. But, it did not hurt all the time. To my stepfather's mind, the only time I seemed to limp was when there were chores to be done. They took me in for x-rays. Because the pain was in my knee, that was what the doctor had x-rayed. Nothing was found. A few days later, Dale told me to take out the trash. As I went to do as he asked, he saw me limping. Certain that I was faking, he threw me into the back yard. Picking up a 2x4, he told me to start running back and forth across the yard. I was in severe pain, but every time I slowed down, he hit me with the board. Finally, I collapsed... not caring if he killed me.

Mom began to shout at him to leave me alone. While they were arguing, I literally crawled to my bed. A few days later, Grandpa and Grandma announced they'd bought me a trip to a Norwegian language camp (Grandpa was mostly Norwegian). Before I could go, I had to have a complete physical. I hadn't been at the doctor's very long, when he saw me limping. He said he'd seen that sort of limp before, and asked if I hurt all the time. When I told him "no," he nodded, and told Mom to have my hip x-rayed. Sure enough, they found I had a congenital condition where the cartilage between the ball and socket of my hip would slip in and out. I was scheduled for surgery, and three pins were put into my hip.

Dale never did apologize. In fact, I've NEVER heard him say he was sorry for anything. By the time I was fourteen, I ran away from home frequently, to avoid getting beat. The only reason I didn't get beat when I returned was because Mom would be so relieved she would intercede for me... to my stepfather's frustration. He'd often accuse her of "coddling" me, and making me into a "pansy".

Truth Or Dare

I was about seven years old when we moved to Sparks, Nevada (next to Reno). Because my parents were having trouble making ends meet, both

of them were working. So, after school, I'd go to the babysitter's house. She had two children - a girl about a year older than me, and a boy that was about a year younger. Next to their house was a little wooden playhouse that the three of us spent a lot of time in. The girl ("Mary") introduced me to her favorite game, "Truth or Dare." She was always looking for excuses to get me to take my pants off. I, on the other hand, was interested in her brother, Johnny. My first sexual experimentation was with him. We didn't do a lot, but we did play with each other's penises. On one occasion, Mary, wanting my attention, dared me to touch her on her butt. Just as she pulled her pants down, her mother looked into the playhouse. Mary told her that I had dared her to do it. The mother sat the three of us on the couch and told us why we shouldn't do such things. It didn't make much sense to me when she told us a stranger might pass by see us doing such things and "take advantage of the situation." For years, I wondered what she'd been talking about.

When I was twelve, I was spending the evening with two older girls, daughters of my stepfather's co-worker, while our parents went out to dinner. They wanted to play Truth or Dare with me. Before long, I realized they wanted to have sex with me. I'd never had intercourse with anyone. To this day, it doesn't really interest me, with a female, especially. But, I admit, I was curious, so I let them "dare" me to do it. I actually ejaculated in the older girl (who was about 15). I'd read stories, and knew that was how girls got pregnant. For weeks after that, I kept waiting to hear that she was "with child." Even though I was afraid of it happening, part of me was hoping it had. Even at twelve years old, I wanted my own children. As I got older, I played Truth or Dare a lot. Actually, I changed the rules of the game, getting rid of the "truth" element. I called it "Double Dare". We would play ten rounds, and each person got two "double dares" that they could use at any time. If I dared someone to do something to me, and they said "double dare", I would have to do it to them, instead. Of course, it always worked to my favor, since I was good with the results, either way. I even played the game with a couple of men when I was a boy. I'm sure they thought they were manipulating me, but it was actually me who was manipulating them. One man, a neighbor, and a friend of my stepfather, was around forty, when I was thirteen. I knew he wanted to fool around because he kept dropping hints whenever we were alone. One day, I told him about my "Double Dare" game, and he eagerly agreed to try it. The first few dares were pretty mundane. I don't even remember what they were. The first one I remember was when he dared me to suck on his finger. When it was my turn, I upped the ante a lot, by daring him to suck my penis. I got caught in my own trap when he said "double dare". I had

never had a man's penis in my mouth before, and wasn't real sure I wanted to. So, I reminded him he hadn't said anything about how long I had to do it for. I put my mouth on him for – maybe – two seconds. Of course, then it was his turn, and he wanted more. He dared me to give him a complete blow-job. He'd forgotten the parameters of the game, but I hadn't. I used my "double dare", and he had to do it to me. That was the first time I came in someone's mouth.

I have played the game with guys my own age, with boys from age five on up, with men up to their sixties, and even with a few girls. In every case, somebody got naked at some point. And, usually, the game ended with some sort of sexual activity. Nobody ever got hurt (I always made that a rule), and everyone always had fun.

The Light In The Ceiling

In addition to my being introduced to Truth or Dare, another important event happened while we were living in Sparks. Our next-door neighbor died. He was in his early teens. Even though I was only seven, at the time, I remembered him - mostly because he liked to walk around his backyard in his underwear. He would even pose for me when he was sure I was looking at him through the fence. I started to emulate him - walking around in just my briefs. I also tried to copy his other hobby: sniffing model glue. Fortunately for me, I thought the stuff smelled awful, and it gave me a headache, so I only tried it once.

One day, there were a bunch of police and an ambulance in front of the boy's house. I later found out that he had died from sniffing glue. I didn't know how to feel. I'd never known anyone who'd died before. Just a few weeks later, my pet poodle, "Fritz", was killed by a car. I became very depressed. My mother and stepfather would get on me for "brooding" for weeks. I just couldn't get over the deaths. Not long after that, I got into trouble for something or other, and was beaten and sent to my room. I was lying on my bed, crying, when a bright light appeared in the ceiling. It may have been a dream or a hallucination, but I've always believed it was real. Out of the light, a voice said to me, "I have called you, my prince, to share love with a world that has forgotten how to love, to restore freedom to those who don't know they are bound, and to bring true joy to a world that only pretends to be happy. For the next forty years, you will endure many hardships, sorrows, and times of loneliness. You will have few that will call you 'friend' and, eventually, even your family will forsake you. You will have a hunger and a thirst to explore and experience every aspect of human nature. Through all, you will learn to love and understand the human race. At the end of forty years, you will begin a time of intense

spiritual training from various beings - human and otherwise - preparing for a time of victory and joy beyond your imagination. I call you 'prince', for you were born to be a king."

Hell's Angels

Many other things happened while I lived on Greenbrae Drive... I had my tonsils out; my sister, Linda, was born and I committed my first crime - stealing change from Mom's purse to buy a candy bar from the local store. I was even "babysat" by the Hell's Angels! Before Linda was born, Mom worked at the Nugget casino. To save money, she'd make a bed in the back of our station wagon, and park in the Nugget parking lot.

The Hell's Angels pretty much controlled the area, and Mom had made friends with some of them. About once an hour, I'd hear motorcycles drive by. Years later, I found out that various members would check on me to make sure I was safe. Sometimes, in the mornings, one of them would give me a ride (while I was still in my pajamas). One of the guys who gave me a ride now and then would set me in front of him, rather than behind, like the others. The man would drive with one hand, and fondle me with the other. I loved the attention... and it felt kinda nice. I told a friend about it, and the friend warned me not to tell anybody else. My friend said he'd told his mom that his 'sitter had done stuff with him... and his mom fired the 'sitter, threatening to call the police. It never made sense to me. If someone was making me feel good, and paying attention to me, why would that person be doing something wrong? I would encounter that question many times throughout my life.

Glen Ellen

Glen Ellen was a small town in Sonoma County, California. In the little complex we lived in, our back yard bordered a large grape vineyard. I spent a lot of time playing in it with my friend, "Alfalfa." What sticks out most in my mind were the various "sexual experiences." Actually, the first experience wasn't exactly "sexual," but my parents looked at it that way. Alfalfa and I were daring each other to do different things: stand on our heads, lick a rock, etc. I dared him to pull down his pants, and run naked across the parking lot. Both of our mothers saw him, and they gave us a lengthy (and confusing) lecture about "boys having sex with boys," and how "evil" it was. After that, Alfalfa and I would sneak off into the vineyard, and come up with all sorts of games where one or both of us exposed our genitals. Sometimes, we'd even touch each other, although Alfalfa always got the "giggles," and I got afraid that somebody would find us. The other encounter I remember was when Mom and Dad left me

and my little sister with a babysitter. I did something or other to get in trouble, and the 'sitter told me she was going to give me a spanking. She took me into the bedroom pulled my pants down and swatted my behind. It didn't really hurt, but I cried, anyway. She said she was sorry for hurting me, and did two odd things, she cupped my genitals gently with her hand, and kissed me on the lips. Strangely, it wasn't the hand on my crotch that bothered me. It was the kiss. She had put her tongue inside my mouth, which I thought was "gross." Later, when my parents came home, I asked how people were supposed to kiss. I didn't say anything about the fondling, but told them the "babysitter kisses weird." I never saw that 'sitter again.

Then, there was "old man Cox". Actually, he wasn't all that old - he had a son my age. But, all the neighborhood kids called him that. My first encounter with him was when Alfalfa and I were riding bikes. We didn't know it, but we'd been riding on his property. He chased us off, saying something about "insurance liability." A few months later, Mr. Cox hosted my Cub Scout troop at his house with a barbecue in his large back yard. I needed to use the restroom, so I went into the house. As I was coming out of the restroom, I noticed Mr. Cox sitting on a white sofa in the living room. I was still afraid of him, so tried to shy away. He told me not to be scared, and to come and sit by him for a minute. Uneasily, I obeyed. He talked a few minutes about Scouts. Then, he casually pointed out that my zipper was down. Embarrassed, I started to pull up my zipper. Mr. Cox said that I was "doing it wrong," and that I would mess up the zipper. He told me to sit on his lap, so he could "do it properly." Mr. Cox said that my underwear was bunched up. So, he unsnapped my pants, and ran his hand down the front a few times. Suddenly, we heard a door slam, like someone was coming in. Hastily, he did up my pants, and told me to go out back, where he'd fix me a "special" hamburger. I don't remember anything about the burger, but I thought differently about "Old Man Cox" from then on. Though I wasn't really friends with his son, I came to visit as often as I could, hoping Mr. Cox would repeat his "activity" with me. He never did, even though I often made sure to walk by him with my zipper down. I was even jealous of his son, figuring he probably got "help" with his zipper all the time.

Taking Care of Marsha

When I was ten, Mom gave birth to my youngest sister, Marsha. About eight months later, I went into her bedroom and saw Marsha having an epileptic seizure. I ran to the living room to tell Mom. At first, my mother thought I was just making it up. But, I was nearly hysterical, and finally

convinced her to look at Marsha. When Mom saw her, she immediately called an ambulance and Marsha was rushed to the hospital, where it was determined that she had epilepsy. I'd gone with them, and a nurse showed my parents - and me - how to care for Marsha when she had a seizure. I learned to lay her face-down across my lap, and just let her be until she finished. From that time on, Marsha had at least three or four serious seizures a week. Mom and Dad tried everything. Medication didn't work. Prayer didn't work. They even brought in a sort of "guru" who charged them a fortune, and put plastic bags full of sand in all the rooms of the house, to "absorb negative energy." Oddly, even that didn't work - and the bags frequently broke, spreading negativity, er, sand, all over the house. Eventually, we just learned to live with the seizures. Well, I did, anyway. About 90% of the time, it was I who took care of my little sister whenever she went into convulsions.

My mother and stepfather began finding excuses to be out of the house a lot. They had become Amway distributors, and went to every meeting and convention in the region. They also took a trip to Reno (about three hours away) every weekend they didn't have something going on with Amway. It came to the point where I seldom was able to go to a friend's house to play, since I would be needed at home to take care of Marsha. After awhile, my other sister, Linda (three years older than Marsha), learned to help out with her.

I ran away from home a few times. Most of the time, though, my parents didn't even know I had been gone, since I feeling so bad about leaving Linda alone with Marsha, I returned within a couple hours. One time, though, I'd had enough. With the help of a friend, I made plans to hide out for good next to a little lake in the woods a few miles out of the town we were living in at the time (Petaluma, California). My friend invited me to attend his father's church that afternoon, before I headed out.

At the service, I got so depressed that, rather than go to the woods, I went behind my friend's house, and thought about how to kill myself. I'd brought some rope with me, and was trying to make a noose, when a man in his early twenties came over and sat beside me, and asked me what was wrong. Even though I didn't know the man, I told him everything. He took me in his arms and let me cry. We spent a couple hours together that evening, talking about everything. He told me that his name was James, and that he was gay. I didn't know what that was, and he explained homosexuality to me. He admitted that he liked "young guys" like me. I asked what kind of things gay people did together. He told me. I then said that I had had a few "gay" experiences, but mostly had just fooled around

with friends. He said it was much better if it was with someone you loved. At that moment, I felt like I loved him, and would have let him do anything. He did give me a big kiss. But, he said I should think about it before we "did anything."

That night, I slept (chastely) on his sofa, and went home first thing the next morning. Mom was so glad I was safe, that she interceded, and kept my stepfather from beating me. James and I did get together a few times after that. When my parents found out why I had run away, they spent more time at home (for a few months) and even allowed me to work a part-time job at a tourist attraction called the "Old Adobe Mission". My boss just happened to be James. Every weekend, for about three months, James and I would have some "alone time" in one of the rooms of the Mission. He wouldn't let me do more than fondle him. But, he would give me oral sex, which I always looked forward to. One day, I went to work, and the Mission was closed up. James was gone, and I never learned what happened to him.

I looked for attention elsewhere, and found it in a neighbor boy, Benny. He was about fifteen, the older brother of a friend of mine (nicknamed "Peanut"). Along with two other friends we'd often play "boot camp." Benny would be the "sergeant," giving us orders. One day, when the other kids weren't near, I told Benny he could order me to do anything and I would do it, even if it was "naughty". After that, Benny would send the other boys off on "scouting missions" while keeping me behind. Most of the time, he just wanted me to masturbate him.

Before long, my parents began to leave me in charge of Marsha once again. One weekend, Mom and Dad came home sooner than expected, and discovered Benny and me – naked – in my bed. After Benny dressed and quickly left, I got a severe (wordless) beating. (I was still naked). Two days later, me and my sisters were sent to stay with Grandma and Grandpa. When we came back, I cried when I learned Peanut and Benny had moved away. I never did learn the details. But, after that, I wasn't given much freedom.

My Last Year of High School

I ran away so many times in my sophomore year that my parents were at their wits' end. Finally, I was the one to come up with the solution. It started when an uncle who passed away willed me his 1968-69 California Classic Mustang. Dale was so jealous of me getting that car that he looked for every excuse to "ground" me from driving. (He'd drive it, instead). One night, I had had enough. My parents went to dinner with some friends. I

quickly loaded everything I owned into the Mustang, and took off. My plan was to head to Grandpa and Grandma's in Northern California, to live with them. They'd always told me I would be welcome, anytime. But, going up the steep hills known as the "grapevine" outside of Los Angeles, a radiator hose broke. I tried to patch it with electrical tape, but it didn't hold. I blew the engine. Not wanting to call my stepfather - who was a mechanic - I got ahold of my grandparents. There really was nothing they could do, and they called my stepfather to tell him where I was. Dale and Mom drove up to get me. Dale got the Mustang going enough to limp home, not saying a word to me. After we got home, Mom told me her parents were sending me a bus ticket.

I moved in with Grandpa and Grandma just a couple of weeks before school started. Not wanting to be a burden, I went looking for work right away. I found employment at a little place within walking distance, called "Abe's Pizza." It was run by an Iranian named "Ibrahim", who went by "Abe". I was the youngest of his three employees, at almost 17. The two others were 19 and 20. I quickly discovered the pizza place was really a "front" for all types of shady business: drugs, gambling, and making pornography. I tended to shy away from drugs and I didn't really understand the gambling. But, I'm ashamed to admit that the porn intrigued me. Especially because most of the stuff they made in the back room was gay porn.

The "models" ranged in age from the mid-20's all the way down to nine or ten. I don't know where they got the kids from, but there were a lot of different ones. Many of them acted like it was no big deal... like they were used to it. Abe tried to get me to participate. But, I still felt that sort of thing was a "sin." I did help them make the porn. I even enjoyed it. There was a little darkroom in an old walk-in freezer, and I learned how to develop film.

Gradually I collected a stash of boy love materials – back issues of the NAMBLA bulletin and various books from a place in the Netherlands called "Acolyte Press." I kept the books and magazines hidden in the back of my closet. One day, I went to work one day to find "crime scene" tape across the front of the restaurant. That night, the news talked about busting up a "major drug ring". They didn't say anything about the porn, for some reason, but, I was sure the cops were going to come looking for me. So, sadly, I carted all the books and magazines to the dump. The cops never came. Years later, I learned there were important people buying the porn, so it was hushed up. Even so, at the time, I was so frightened that I made

up my mind to "go straight." I even ended up with my first (and only, really) girlfriend.

It started like this: I was in the advanced French class, having taken two years of French. In the class, there were just three people, me, my next-door neighbor and friend, Kathy, and a foreign exchange student from the Netherlands named "Eugenie." Eugenie spoke seven languages fluently, and planned to be an interpreter for the United Nations. She had a beautiful body, with long, flowing, blonde hair. More important than anything, she really liked me. We spent a lot of our free time together, and talked about every subject. Trying as hard as I could to live a "straight" life, I started to talk with her about the prospect of marriage. She told me she loved going on dates with me, and really would have loved to be my wife, except for one very important detail: I was gay. I asked how she knew, and she told me her brother was gay. Even though I was not "stereotypical", she said anyone who knew me very well should be able to see it. She even told me she could tell by the way I talked about certain people and subjects that I was probably an "ephebophile" (someone attracted to teens). I started to protest, and she put her finger on my lips to silence me. Eugenie explained, in her country, that was not a big deal. She even said one of their leaders had a 13-year-old boyfriend, and nobody made an issue of it. All her words, however, didn't serve to comfort me. Instead, they just made me feel lonely. I was too religious to admit I was gay, let alone a "pervert", no matter what Eugenie told me. I hate to admit it, but I stopped spending time with Eugenie.

Fortunately, a counselor told me about the California Equivalency Test. If I were to pass it, I would get my diploma. I did pass. Right after I received my diploma, I made the decision to leave the area, and all the "bad influences" of people I knew. I loaded up my car, and moved to Twin Falls Idaho, with no real plan, other than to "get right with God." There was a church in Twin Falls with the same name as the one I had attended in California, the fairly generic "First Christian Church." It was the middle of the day, on a Monday, and I didn't expect anyone to be there. But, I tried the door, anyway. Only one person was there, a gorgeous guy just a little older than me, who introduced himself as "Jim, the Youth Pastor." Jim and I quickly became close friends. We never discussed it, outright, but it was clear that he and I had a LOT in common. A couple years later, Jim was arrested for having sex with a couple of boys in his Sunday School program. It should be noted that neither boy (12 and 14) had wanted Jim arrested. One of the other parishioners had walked in on them, and called the cops. Both boys refused to testify, but Jim still received a twenty-year

sentence. When the older boy turned 18, he frequently visited Jim in prison.

Meanwhile, I ended up having a run-in with the police, myself. I had obtained a job at Radio Shack. Just after I started working, the rent was due on the basement room I was renting. I took \$40 from a deposit envelope on my manager's desk. It was caught on camera. I was arrested, and charged with "embezzlement", a felony. Since I was very involved with my church, a lot of parishioners wrote letters to my judge, and I received only a suspended sentence. But, in addition to my theft conviction, I was starting to "slip" in my efforts not to think about guys,. Again, I felt I needed to go elsewhere. My stepfather was now stationed in Colorado, so the family was living there. Over the phone, at least, my relationship with Dale seemed to have improved. Mom found a little Bible college, with inexpensive tuition that she said she'd help out with. So, I sold what little I had, including my car, and bought a bus ticket to Colorado Springs, Colorado - with dreams to (once again) "start over".

A Precious Life

I got married for the wrong reasons. I was told by the dean of the small private Bible college that I was attending that in order to become an ordained minister, I would have to be married. In the first place, I had no business even thinking about an ordination. My religious life was a "front." In my real life, I was a crook, a con-man, and a gay pervert. To top everything off, because I had been spending a lot of time with my best friend, Diana, the pastor had warned me about "avoiding the appearance of evil." He hinted that, if Diana and I were engaged, it would be better. So, I talked to Diana, and asked if she'd be amenable to marriage. She eagerly agreed. Even though she was one of the few people who knew I wasn't attracted to females, she didn't care. She had been partially paralyzed on her left side when she was young, and so was too self-conscious to try and date anyone. And, she wanted a family. We instantly became engaged.

Then my life took an odd turn. I'd been paying my school tuition with my job as a telemarketer. I was good at conning people out of money for things they didn't need. Working at a company that sold coupon books, I rapidly advanced to assistant manager. One of my duties was training new employees. That's how I met John and Tami, two incredibly adept con-artists. As it happened, they were not there to be telemarketers. They were there to recruit - and found me. Over the next six months, John and Tami helped me to set up a completely new identity. John had a file-cabinet full of assorted documents that he could alter with some white-out and a copy machine (this was in the 80's, before desktop computers). I so fully

immersed myself into their "training" that I even moved into their little single-wide mobile home. Finally, it was time to implement the elaborate scheme. I opened a checking account under my new identity. Once the packet of checks arrived (I'd ordered extra), the first part of the plan was put into action. After removing anything that was actually valuable, and loading the trailer with junk furnishings, we spread newspapers throughout the mobile home. Then, we sprayed a mist of gasoline everywhere. Lastly, John set up a birthday candle and lit it. We drove to a nearby truck stop, and ordered dinner. Sure enough, it wasn't long until we heard fire trucks, and saw a huge plume of smoke. We waited a bit longer, then leisurely headed home. We arrived in time to see the rear wall of the trailer collapse. As planned, everything was completely destroyed. We were interviewed by the local newspaper about our "tragic loss". As instructed, I used my alias for the article.

And then, phase two, after a few days, I went on a "spending spree". At the time, there was a company that verified checks for certain businesses called "Checkright". I made sure to shop at stores which displayed the Checkright logo. As I'd been told would happen, after making a few purchases, a Checkright verifier asked for me to come to the phone. I explained to her that my mobile home had burned down, and I was replacing everything with the insurance money. I referred her to the newspaper article with my "name" in it. As John and Tami had told me, after that, I had "carte blanche", I wrote over \$50,000 worth of checks, no questions asked.

It was almost the perfect crime. Almost. I was arrested a few months later. Since John and Tami loaded most of the stuff into a trailer and promptly disappeared out of my life, I had little to show for my efforts. My grandparents posted my bail, and my attorney assured me that, since I'd been talked into the scam, I would probably get probation. Having no place to live, I moved in with Diana. I also "repented" of my ways, and re-enrolled in Bible school. But I was now "living in sin." To resolve that, Diana and I got married. Right away, Diana told me she wanted a child. I did, too. The problem was that I had no attraction to her at all. I could get hard, I just couldn't reach orgasm. She came up with the solution, I'd masturbate while looking at gay porn - then put it in real quick at just the right moment. Surprisingly, it worked. It wasn't long before Diana told me she was expecting.

Five months later, though, contrary to what my lawyer had promised, I was sentenced to three years in prison for the check fraud. I was

devastated. The baby was due in less than four months. I wouldn't be there for the birth.

After a couple months, I was transferred to Buena Vista, Colorado. At first, it was very rough for me. I was doing all I could to "get right with God." I read the Bible constantly. The Bible college had arranged to send my lessons to me. Eventually, I was sent to a place we called "Camp Roubideaux". Soon after, Diana gave birth to our son, which we named "David Dale." Ostensibly, the middle name was in honor of my stepfather. But, actually, his name came from a secret story my grandfather had told me, about an ancient god of familial love, "Davdalus".

David almost didn't survive birth. He was born with a three-chambered heart, and malformed arteries. The baby would undergo four surgeries in three weeks. In spite of everything, he recovered, and seemed to thrive. Three months after he was born, Diana brought my son to Visiting, so I could hold him for the first time. The two of us developed an instant bond. In my arms, he never cried or fussed. In fact, over the next two years, whenever I was around, David would insist on my holding him.

I was so upset when visiting hours were over, I began to pray, to Jesus to Eroses ("gods of love" that my grandfather had told me stories about) to the angels – to anyone who would listen. I knew in my heart I might not have my son for very long, I needed to get out of prison. Somebody heard me.

Through a clerical error, the prison board thought it was *me* who had the three-chambered heart. I didn't argue. After just nine months of a three-year sentence, I was released from prison, and sent to a halfway house, just before Christmas. The halfway house was about twenty miles from where my wife and son lived, and I had no money or transportation. That didn't stop me. As soon as the administrators allowed me to leave, I walked the twenty miles, in the snow. When Diana opened the door, she was very happy to see me. Not because she missed me, but because she couldn't handle David's crying. I went to the playpen where he was. He saw me, and got a big grin on his face holding up his arms so I would pick him up. Before I had to return to the halfway house, Diana made me dinner. I had to eat with one hand, because my son wouldn't let me set him down. Fortunately, when I had to leave, David had fallen asleep.

I got a job driving a sandwich truck. Not because it payed well (it didn't), but because it gave me a company vehicle to drive during the day. Though I had to spend nights and weekends at the halfway house, the weekdays were mine. I worked eight hours delivering sandwiches to convenience stores, and the rest of the time with my son. Diana appreciated my taking

him off her hands. Before long, I got to where I had to stay at the halfway house only on the weekends. So, I got a job as a taxi driver. That way, I had a vehicle to drive 24 hours a day (I paid a daily fee). I drove at night, and earned enough money to rent a nice, two-bedroom house for the three of us. Things were going very well. Until, one evening, my world began to crumble.

One night, I pulled into the parking area behind our house. Right away, I knew something was wrong. When I went inside, my feelings were confirmed. Diana met me at the door and told me not to be mad. I didn't know what she was talking about, but knew it involved my child.

"Where's David?" I demanded, trying to stay calm.

"I couldn't take his crying anymore," she replied, "so, I gave him away."

I went numb. Eventually, I got the words out: "What do you mean?"

"He wouldn't stop, so I call Child Services. He's in a foster home."

For the first time in my life, I wanted to kill someone. I resisted the urge, but did break a chair, and put my fist through the wall.

I spent the next few weeks talking to every bureaucrat I could, trying to get custody of David. The challenge was that I was still on parole. Because of his heart condition, and his having been in an "unfit home environment," they could not give me custody, but, they did allow me to spend a lot of time with him each day. I developed a very good relationship with his foster parents - an older couple with very loving hearts.

David was more than a year old before he said his first word. I was playing blocks with him one morning when he looked at me with a big smile and said his first word, "Daddy." I was so happy, tears streamed down my face.

David taught me more about love and loyalty than anyone else in my life. At a year old, of course, he didn't know all my "secrets." He didn't know about all the bad things I had done. All he knew was that I was his "Daddy". For over a year, I was taught love, compassion, loyalty, and responsibility. Because of him, I decided to leave my thieving, conning ways behind, and truly learn how to love.

Just after David's second birthday, tragedy struck. The doctors discovered that one of the shunts they had put inside my son was failing. He was taken to Children's Hospital in Denver. Mom flew in from where they were living in Idaho to be with us. The night before the surgery, Diana also showed up. David would have nothing to do with her. He wasn't

happy unless he was in my lap, or in one of the plastic cars there at the hospital. He did warm up to Mom. If I wasn't in the room, he was okay with her holding him. But, the second I walked in, he would say, "Daddy, pick me up!"

Five days after his second birthday, May 15, he was prepped for surgery, and placed on a gurney to go into the operating room. He held onto my hand all the way to the double doors I couldn't enter. As I gave him a big hug and kiss, he smiled at me and said, "Bye, Daddy, I love you."

As soon as David was out of sight, I needed to be alone. I found a little chapel room, and went inside. I cried to any god who would listen to help me. I opened up a Bible, and saw, "those who sow in tears will reap with joy." I didn't know what that meant for the future, but I knew what it meant at the time: my son wouldn't make it.

The surgery, we knew, would take hours. After I'd cried myself out, I went back to the waiting room. Mom noticed I was having trouble being around Diana, so she suggested we go to the hospital cafeteria for a cup of coffee. Mom and I talked about various things, especially all the fun times I'd had with David. Suddenly, we both stopped talking, and looked at each other. We knew, in that instant, my little boy was gone. We went back upstairs, just as the doctor came in to give us the news. The surgery had gone well, but his heart just wouldn't start back up.

Drummer Boy

When my son, David, died in surgery at just two years old, my world fell apart, and I changed considerably. One of the biggest things that changed about me in that area was my attraction to boys. I started to accept that that was a part of me. But, like a starving man kept from a feast, the part of me I had denied for so long became an obsession. I got so obsessed that I bought every book and video that featured anyone between about 13 and 20. I'd always known I was gay, even if I didn't admit it to anyone (including myself). The fact that my primary "age of attraction" was in the "illegal" zone made everything worse.

Bothered by my "perverted" feelings, I started reading everything I could find on the subject - from every angle. I read about the "evilness" of my desires from the religious right and child advocacy groups, and the "blessings" of my attractions from other, more controversial groups. I found a bit of comfort after reading a book put out by the Kinsey Institute which claimed my age range was actually quite common, even if most people won't publicly admit it.

After wandering for a year or so, I decided to move to Hollywood with the vague notion of becoming an actor. After struggling for a few months, I started working for a janitorial company, calling businesses to sign up new accounts. I did such a good job that I got more accounts than we had janitors for. Because we had so much business, I was allowed to make extra money taking care of some accounts, myself. My bosses, an East Indian couple, liked me and my work so much that they bought me my own equipment. I must confess I didn't stay very loyal to my employers. I soon discovered I could make a lot more money getting my own accounts. I didn't get rich, but made enough to move out of my van into a seedy hotel on the edge of East L.A.

One weekend, when I was out driving, I stumbled on a little church called the "Pentecostal House of God." I noticed it was affiliated with the Pentecostal Churches of God, which had sponsored the Bible college I had attended. A sign out front said that there would be a service at six o'clock. I decided to attend, and see what it was like. At the appointed hour, I pulled my van into the parking lot behind the church, and joined the group walking in. It was, primarily, a young congregation. There were a couple elderly women there, but the median age seemed to be under thirty. Most were young families with babies and toddlers in tow. Inside, the place was large enough to seat about a hundred people, and was about half-full. The children were herded into a small classroom in the back.

A small three-piece band began playing music. A piano was played by a 30-something lady; a guitar was played by a stocky young man; and a set of drums was played by, an angel. The drummer was in his mid-teens. Slender, but not skinny. A bit of that "gawky" look that comes from a sudden adolescent growth-spurt. He had shoulder-length light brown hair that had a smooth, silky sheen flipped up a bit at the collar and with bangs almost in his eyes. His nose was small, with a slight up-turn at the tip. Later, I'd see that he had deep, silvery-blue eyes.

I had sat in a pew toward the back. There were a lot of empty spaces, so, surreptitiously, I moved closer, and toward the left, closer to the drummer boy. Eventually, I was just two rows from the front. I suppose everyone must have thought I was really interested in hearing the music. I just about melted when the drummer looked at me, and smiled. I smiled back, and gave a stupid little half wave - like we'd been friends for years. After the music was over, a man in his mid-thirties stepped up to the pulpit, and the band members came over and sat in the pews. The drummer boy sat in the pew directly in front of me. I'm sure there was a sermon. All I did for the next half hour or so was stare at the back of the drummer boy's neck,

wishing I could caress it under those wavy locks. After the sermon, the band went back up to play. An altar call was given, and I went forward with a few others. When the pastor came to me, I said I wanted to rededicate myself to God. There couldn't have been a bigger hypocrite. I only had one prayer, but I sure wasn't going to speak it aloud. At last, after a lot of forgotten small talk, my prayer began to be answered. HE came over to talk to me.

"Welcome to our church," came a voice obviously on the verge of changing from boy to man.

"Th, thanks," I stammered, "I really like, it."

"I'm Jason. The preacher there is my dad, and the pianist is my mom."

I pulled it together enough to introduce myself, and told him he was good at the drums. He told me he'd been playing since he was five. Then, he told me he played a lot of "oldies," like the Beach Boys. I told him that was one of my favorite groups. Spontaneously, Jason started singing, "Round, Round, I Get Around!" It may have been infatuation, but I thought he had a pretty good voice. I told him he should be lead singer. He said a lead singer needed to play a guitar or something. All he knew how to play was the drums. Immediately, I jumped on the opportunity, telling him I could teach him the guitar. Before the boy could respond to my offer, the pastor came over and shook my hand. He introduced himself as "Brother McCullough" and added, "I see you've met my son, the star drummer."

Regaining my composure, I introduced myself. He asked if I was Pentecostal, and I told him about my ordination from the Pentecostal Bible college in Colorado. He said he was glad I was there, and asked if I lived in the area. I told him I lived in Los Angeles.

"Too bad," he said, "I'm looking for a youth minister."

"But I was thinking of moving here", I said, quickly, "I used to live here when I was younger."

He told me that he wanted to get to know me a bit better before offering me the job. We talked for a bit longer, then he introduced me to his wife, "Sister McCullough." (It's impolite to call an adult parishioner by their first name). Jason had been standing there the whole time, just smiling at me. Reluctantly, I realized I had to get on the road, and told them so.

"You could stay with us!" Jason volunteered.

As much as I loved the prospect, I didn't want to appear too eager, or desperate.

"It's OK, I demurred, "I really need to get back. I have some work to do in the morning."

"What do you do?" Jason asked.

"I own a small janitorial business."

"Do you have any openings?" the boy asked, "I'm looking for work."

I wasn't sure if it was my imagination or not, but the teen seemed to be looking for ways to get to know me. I was barely making enough money to support myself.

"I don't actually have any employees," I told him, "but I do sometimes hire someone to help out on big jobs. And, I am trying to get a contract for a chain of beauty salons. If I get that, I might need someone to work Friday and Saturday nights." I didn't mention that the salons were all over the L.A. area. If I hired him, he'd pretty much have to stay with me two days each week.

"Cool!" the boy said, excitedly. "Hope you get the business!"

So did I.

I began to commute twice a week from Los Angeles to Yucaipa. We all got to know each other quite well. Jason and I looked for every excuse to spend time together. Brother McCullough and I became pretty good friends, too. Both of us enjoyed playing chess, and would play two or three games after each Sunday morning service while Sister McCullough fixed lunch. I began getting involved in the church, singing with the band, and teaching Sunday school. I never had much "alone time" with Jason though.

Finally, I got the contract I'd been waiting for, sort of. It was supposed to be for ten stores. They gave me only three, as a "test run." but that gave me the opening I was looking for. Jason's parents had come to trust me, so they readily consented to his working for me, even staying with me two days a week. It did mean a lot of driving for me, but I knew it would be worth it.

Each Friday afternoon, I'd pick Jason up from school. The first time set the pattern for some time to come. I had one store to clean on Friday, and two on Saturday. The one on Friday wasn't far from where I lived, and only took an hour to clean. Jason caught on quickly, and did make my job easier.

As we approached my seedy, rundown apartment building, I was a bit embarrassed that I'd let the family think I was better off than I really was. Jason took it all in stride, letting me know it didn't matter to him. I was

even more embarrassed when we walked by the front desk, and the manager said I'd have to pay an extra nine dollars a night for the "boy." Being after eleven o'clock, it was time for bed by the time we got to my room, which consisted of a double bed, two nightstands, and a broken-down dresser. Actually, I had a "suite", compared to most other rooms, since I had my own bathroom.

Without saying much, I stripped to my underwear, and crawled into bed. Jason, not sure what to do, started to climb in with his clothes on. I told him he couldn't wear his clothes to bed, we'd been working, and they were filthy.

He shrugged. Then, inexplicably, went into the bathroom to remove his clothes. I never understood that move, since he came back out, and practically "posed" for me, clad in just a pair of white jockey briefs. It was obvious that Jason had gone through puberty. He saw me looking at him, and gave me a sly grin as he got under the covers. I knew what I wanted to do. But, now that I had the opportunity, I froze. After all, not only was he half my age, he was the pastor's son. I turned my back on him, and said, "good night." I felt him turn away, as well, although he maneuvered so that our butts were touching. I decided to pretend I was asleep, and dreaming. I mumbled something about my ex-wife, and turned around, so I was spooning him. To my surprise, he turned to face me, and stuck his tongue in my mouth when I kissed him. It quickly became apparent that this teen was more experienced than I was. I had never French-kissed anyone before, but he obviously knew all about it. I wasn't sure if I should keep pretending to be asleep. Jason solved the problem by placing my hand on his penis, and ordering me to suck it.

Having never actually given a blow job, before, I had to let the boy tell me how to do it. After I'd finished, I sort of hoped he'd return the favor. Instead, he snuggled up to me, and went fast asleep.

The next morning, neither of us said anything about the night before. Jason did ask me about my ex, though. For the first time since my son had died, I opened up about my past. I didn't hold anything back.

Jason was a good listener. After I had bared my soul, he gave me a big hug. Then, he said, quietly, "I won't say anything about what we did, on one condition."

A shiver ran down my spine. The teenager had me over a barrel. What would he want from me? I didn't have a lot of money. The only things I owned of any value were my janitorial tools and my van. I prepared myself for anything.

"What?" I asked.

"That we do it all the time, and more," he said, grabbing my head and giving me a big kiss.

For the next few months, I spoiled Jason rotten, spending all the money I made from my new contract. We went to Disneyland, Universal Studios, and to all sorts of TV shows in Hollywood and Burbank. It was about a month before he did for me what I had done for him. When he finally got up the courage, he found he really enjoyed it, and wanted to do it all the time. He almost made me wreck early one Sunday morning, as we were heading to the church, when he undid my pants, and started in on me while we were driving down the freeway. I had to stop him for fear some other driver might see.

We had a great time together, until disaster struck, and not in the way I always thought it would. It started when my former bosses (the East Indian couple) decided they wanted the equipment they'd bought for me back. Rather than asking for it, they called the cops, and reported it stolen. I was so embarrassed when the police came to our church during a service, threatening to arrest me if I didn't give them everything, two floor buffers, a wet/dry vacuum, etc. Just like that, I was out of business. I'd spent any extra money on Jason, and was living "hand-to-mouth". I couldn't even keep paying rent. I would have to go back to living in my van.

Jason suggested I move in with his family. I said that I did not want to "impose." The truth was, I was afraid that it would be too easy for me and Jason to get caught. After I bared my soul, Brother McCullough said I could park my van behind the church, plugging into the electricity. He even gave me a key, so I would have access to the bathroom.

For awhile, Jason and I weren't able to spend much time together. We'd find an occasional excuse, like going swimming or fishing. Our favorite activity was going to the drive-in theater. But, we didn't do a lot in that small town for fear someone would discover us.

One weeknight, though, around nine, Jason came to the church with a friend of his. They had been to a party, and Jason asked me to borrow the key, so they could use the church restroom. I handed him my key-chain, and they went inside. Too late, I realized I had locked myself out of my van. There was a little chill in the air, and I just had a pair of shorts on. I knocked on the church door, and hollered for Jason to let me in. He called back, saying he would, if I promised to do something for him. Without thinking, I told him I'd do whatever he wanted me to.

Letting me in, he introduced me to his friend, Josh. Josh was a little older than Jason, with short, strawberry-blonde hair. Jason took me by the hand, and led me to one of the pews. When I asked what he wanted, he said I

had to give both of them full-body massages, complete with two "happy endings".

A few nights later, there was a knock on the door of my van. Expecting to see Jason, I saw Josh standing there, instead. I thought maybe he wanted to fool around. Instead, he wanted to blackmail me. He said, if I didn't give him a hundred dollars, he'd go to the cops, and tell them everything. I told him I had less than ten dollars. He said he'd take my TV, instead.

As I was wrapping up the cord on my TV, Jason came riding up on his bike, and asked what was going on. I told him Josh hadn't liked our "activities", and wanted payment. Although Jason was younger, he was in a lot better shape than Josh. Jason ordered Josh to leave me alone, "or else." Josh said that he was only joking, and took off.

I was making a little money, doing yard work for some of the parishioners, and had saved almost enough to move into an apartment. But, the incident with Josh shook me to the core. What was worse, Jason's father seemed to be getting suspicious.

One day, he asked, "Just how close are you to my son?"

Hesitantly, I replied that we were good friends. Then, as if out of the blue, he told me about a friend of his whose son had been molested. Then, Brother McCullough said, if he ever found out someone was "abusing" Jason, he would forget he was a minister, and probably risk the fires of Hell.

He then, seeming to change the subject, asked me for the church key. He said he had lost his. I didn't believe him. I was also sure he knew everything. I was even afraid he might have already notified the cops. As soon as he left the church, I got in my van to leave town. Two blocks from the church, I saw Jason, walking. He saw me, and I pulled over and rolled down my window. Jason asked where I was going. I lied, and said someone had a tree limb that fell on their roof. The last thing he said to me was, "Hurry back, I'm horny!"

I've always considered Jason my first real love. Years later, I wrote a short poem to honor him,.

ODE TO A DRUMMER BOY

The last time I saw him, he was waving goodbye.

I had to leave, to stay would be abject agony.

To be near him, not allowed to be with him to live close by, not near as was my heart.

Our love was deep, unspoken, profound.

Our life twined together should have been.
To see one another, not viewing any else.
To kiss, to hug not much further, alas.
A move was what was needed, putting him far away.
The last time I saw him, he was waving goodbye.

Flyer Business

After abandoning my (illegal) boyfriend, out of fear, I moved back to the San Francisco Bay area. I had lived with Grandma and Grandpa so many times, that when Grandma suggested I move back in, it was an easy choice. As a matter of fact, the rest of our family worried about her living alone. I knew she would have been fine. Yes, she'd been with Grandpa since she was thirteen (he had been 32). But, when he died of heart failure, she managed to handle everything OK. She even kept working as a nurse for an oral surgeon.

Just before my son died, I had owned a small flyer delivery business in Colorado. There was very little overhead, and all employees were paid for each flyer they hung on a door. Once I settled back in, I made up my mind to launch another, similar business. Thanks to a new invention - the desktop computer - I was able to add design work and printing to my services. Then, I placed two ads: one, telling about the services I offered for small businesses and another offering work on a commission basis.

I had run away from a relationship with an underage boy. I didn't stop to think about the fact that the majority of people who would take a job delivering flyers from house to house would be young. I wound up hiring ten boys, ranging in age from ten to sixteen. This was before people were hyper-concerned about kids being "abused," and it was a simple thing to get parents to sign a permission form (which was required in California, for minors). Two of the younger boys, Steve and Sam, were sons of a friend of the family. I had babysat them a couple times when they were babies, but hadn't been around them, as they got older. I had no idea what they were like. I ended up with some lucrative contracts, and was able to give all the boys as much work as they wanted. I would pick up everyone who wanted to work each day in front of the high school. Most of my workers went there, or the junior high next door.

Ironically, one of the first times I pulled up in front of the school, one of the teachers came out to find why a bunch of boys were getting into the back of a windowless panel van. I explained about the business, and he was satisfied. But the very next day I decided to get some magnetic signs for the sides of my van.

A few months later, I had a small contract to fill, and needed just three

boys to deliver the flyers. I had bought a second vehicle - a Pinto station wagon - which I could use for smaller runs. We were just about finished with the neighborhood we were delivering to, when Sam (12) complained that he had a severe headache. The other two, wanting a little extra commission, said they would finish up and Sam and I could just wait in the car. Until that point, I had resisted all urges to do anything. Normally, there are a number of boys around, and I was afraid to even mention that I was gay. Part of that was fear one of them would say something to the wrong person, and part was fear they would laugh at me or (worse) say something like, "eww, gross!". Sitting on the bench seat next to a really cute boy was rapidly becoming difficult. Then, he asked me if I knew any tricks to get rid of headaches. I told him I had read about acupuncture points, and I knew a couple of ways. I showed him the first one, pinching the soft flesh on the hand between the thumb and forefinger. He tried it, but said it didn't help. He asked me what the other way was. I told him he would need to rub one of his testicles. He grinned at me, and stuck his hand down his pants. He did it for a couple minutes, then said that didn't work, either. I told him he had to kind of massage it back and forth. Even though I admit I was sort of maneuvering things that way, I came close to fainting when he asked me if I would do it for him. I asked if he was serious, and he slid over right next to me and said, "Go ahead." I did what he asked. I enjoyed the contact, but was feeling very guilty. After just a couple minutes, the other two boys came around the corner, heading toward the car. I quickly pulled my hand out, and Sam slid over. Just before the others got in, Sam said, "Thanks, that helped."

About a week later, after I had dropped off all but one of the boys, 16-year-old Jake, he asked if we could stop by my house before taking him home. I was floored when he told me he had a real bad headache, and that Sam had told him how I healed his. I asked Jake if he was really sure. He said he was. To confirm I wasn't misunderstanding, I told him I would have to get "very personal." He said that was OK. We went to my living room, and I told him to pull down his pants. He pulled down his jeans, but left his underwear on. I still wasn't sure if he wanted me to do what I thought he did. So, gingerly, I began rubbing through his briefs. He told me I could "go inside," and started to lower the underwear. Suddenly, I heard my grandmother's car pulling into the driveway. Jake rapidly pulled up his pants. As Grandma came in the door, I was afraid she would notice that Jake had become very aroused. If she did, she didn't comment on it. She just asked if we were done for the day. I told her we'd just finished, and I was going to take Jake home. She did tell me to "take my time."

After I got back, Grandma told me she thought Jake was a cute boy - and asked me if we were "an item". After a long conversation, where she mostly warned me to be careful about who knew, I discovered that Grandma knew me a lot better than I had thought. She had known I was gay since I was twelve. And, she also knew my primary attraction was to young teens. She told me something that everyone in the family knew, but that I'd never really given much thought to. My grandfather had been 31 when he started dating her, and she was 12. They got married a year later. Of course, times were different. It was no secret, and Grandpa had jokingly been given a cradle at his bachelor party. I just hadn't expected Grandma to be so accepting of my desires. Especially since I wasn't.

For a few weeks, nothing was said by Jake or Sam about "headaches" or anything else. I chalked it up to them feeling as guilty as I did. Then, in the middle of delivering flyers, it started raining real hard. I bundled the ten boys who were working into the van, and took them to my office, which was nearby, to wait out the storm. When we got there, the boys discussed what we should do while we were waiting. One of them spotted a deck of cards on my desk, and suggested a game of poker. Another one suggested "strip poker." I didn't argue. None of us really knew the rules, but before long, all of us were down to our underwear. They had decided the first to lose their underwear was the "loser." I was sort of in a daze, and honestly do not remember everything that happened. I remember some of them doing a dance. Only Steve (Sam's 14-year-old brother) was completely naked, and was enjoying the laughter from the other boys as he gyrated. I don't think anybody did anything more "sexual" than that. To this day, I don't even know how most of the boys got home. (One of the older ones probably drove them). Then rain had never let up. Only Steven and Sam were left. I was supposed to take them home when their mother got off work. We still had an hour or so. Steven, still naked, asked what we should do, now. I told him I was tired, and was going to lie down on the sofa in my office. I (still in just my briefs) lay down, and closed my eyes. Then, being very cagey, told them not to get any ideas, like pulling down my underwear. As I hoped, Steven came over, and did what I'd said not to. Then, he started playing with it. I just lay there, letting him do whatever he wanted. Eventually, both of them were there. Sam dared his brother to suck on it, which he did. I told him to stop, afraid that I would have an orgasm. He did stop, but both of them kept playing with me, and I shot all over the place, making a mess. Both boys thought it was hilarious.

Driving back to their house, Steven and Sam confided to me that they fooled around with each other all the time. But, I was deep in thought - feeling guilty and afraid.

When I got back home, I was trying to decide what to do, when my ex-wife called from Colorado. She'd gotten married - and divorced, and had a baby girl. Her parents were trying to take custody away, and Diana didn't know who else to call. The judge had told her she needed to be married, or at least have someone living with her to help take care of the child.

It had been five years since I had seen my ex-wife, Diana. We'd only even talked a couple times (one of those was about our divorce). When she called, and said she needed help keeping custody of her daughter. I still didn't like Diana all that much. But, this gave me the perfect excuse to run away from danger and guilt. The next day, abandoning my business, and a number of boys who'd depended on me for an income (and more?), I sold my car for a lot less than it was worth, loaded up my van and moved back to Colorado Springs, Colorado.

The Trip Back to Colorado

On the way to Colorado Springs, I decided to participate in the California State Bowling Championship in Southern California. I had qualified for it, through my bowling league. A friend I bowled with offered to pay my entry fee, if I'd bowl with him in the partners part of the tournament. It was in San Bernardino, not far from Yucaipa, the town where my first real love lived. After the championship was over, I worked up the courage to drive out to see the family. It was a Wednesday night, so there would be a church service. I got there just as it was starting and sat in the back. Jason wasn't there, but the rest of the family was. After the service, a boy, about 12 came over and gave me a big hug. It took me a minute to realize it was Jason's little brother, Jakobe. Jakobe had only been seven years old when I had last been there. Other than teaching him in Sunday school, I hadn't really interacted with him much. He told me his brother had gone to bed early as he was going to college early in the morning. His parents came over, and greeted me warmly, which surprised me a bit. Pointedly, none of us discussed the past. They invited me to their house for dinner, and Jakobe asked if he could ride with me. Again, I was surprised when he was given permission.

On the ride to the house, Jakobe told me some interesting things. He said that after I disappeared, Jason was given the "third degree." Jason had assured them that nothing had ever happened between the two of us, that we had only been good friends. Then, Jakobe surprised me more when he said Jason had told HIM the truth. He told me Jason was engaged to a girl, but the he (Jakobe) was available. As he said that, he put his hand on my thigh. I started to formulate a plan: I told Jakobe I was going to Disneyland in the morning and I told him he might ask his parents if he

could go with me. Jakobe got excited. The minute we got in the house, he started begging his parents to let him go with me. Meanwhile, Jason had been awakened to see me. My first reaction was that Jason was HUGE. He had shot up to seven foot, two inches. He shook my hand, and his hand engulfed mine.

I about cried when he said, in a big, booming voice, "I had thought we were friends, but you just abandoned me, and the family." Without giving me a chance to respond, he said he needed to get some sleep, and went to his room.

That was going on while Jakobe was trying to convince his parents that missing one day of school would not hurt him. In the end, they decided that he couldn't go. I didn't know if they were still suspicious of me, or what. Brother McCullough, as I was leaving, took me aside, and explained that he had smelled cigarette smoke on my breath, so knew I had "backslidden" from my Christianity. He wished me luck in my travels, and even handed me fifty dollars to "help enjoy Disneyland." I didn't tell him that I planned to go only to spend time with his youngest son.

As I started to pull away, Jakobe, who had actually been crying, yelled for me to wait a minute. For a second, I thought he was trying to sneak off with me. He came to my window, and (making sure his dad had gone into the house) told me he wanted to give me something that Jason had taught him. He told me to close my eyes, which I did. Suddenly, I felt his lips on mine. I wanted the kiss to go on forever, but was worried someone would see us. I broke off, and told him I would never forget him, or Jason. Before I drove off, I asked him to tell his brother I hadn't wanted us to get in trouble, so had to leave. Jakobe assured me that Jason wasn't really mad at me - he had really loved me.

[Editor's note: Eventually Dennis was imprisoned in relation to photographing minors. He was sentenced to a minimum of forty years. As is often the case with "sex abuse" cases, the legal procedures surrounding this case were questionable, so it is difficult to tell what the facts actually were. There is not room in this collection of short accounts to deal with all of that. However, the story that began here would not be complete without updating the reader with regard to a few events that transpired after his incarceration.]

The End, or the Beginning?

After many months in county jail, I arrived at the Idaho State Correctional Institute in February of 2003. I was absolutely terrified. Although I'd been in prison when I was twenty, I knew it would be a very different

experience. It had been made public in court that I was gay. It would have been daunting enough to just have that over my head. But, I was also what inmates called a "cho-mo." While it meant "child molester", it was used toward anyone with a "sex crime".

Fortunately for me, I was big. Coming into the system, I weighed 310 pounds. Thinking to influence a conservative judge at sentencing, I had also shaved off my long hair. And, I'd begun to grow a beard. Top all that off with the fact that I came in with a chip on my shoulder, and I came across as someone most people avoided. My first housing assignment helped, as well. In front of the unit I was assigned to I noticed a group of prisoners of varying ages, many of whom were obviously gay. They were laughing and joking. Two of them introduced themselves to me as "Monica" Hebdon and "Grandma" Danny Curtis. Danny had read about me, and sort of took me under his wing.

Peter was a 19-year-old gay inmate, who was rumored to be a "mo". That was bad enough, but he was also small, looking like he was 12. A mutual friend had introduced us, telling me he was worried for Peter. I said he could hang out with us. One day, he confided to me he was being charged "rent" by some gang members. I told him I wouldn't get involved. I liked Peter, but didn't want to ruin my "reputation". Then one day, Peter was killed in the gym bathroom by one of the gang members. I was devastated. I knew I could have prevented it. I started thinking that maybe I SHOULD get involved.

Not long after that, I was taken to "the hole" for giving a friend of mine a blow job. I was "sentenced" to 30 days of segregation. In protest, I began a hunger strike. After about three days of fasting, I began having a series of epiphanies. Drawing on the Erosion religious principles I'd been taught by my Grandfather, I realized that it would be possible to help people, even in prison. After fasting for ten days, I was visited by the same entity that I believe had visited me with words of encouragement when I was seven.

During what turned out to be a forty-five day stay in the hole, I formulated a plan to "re-found" the ancient Greek religion known as "Erosian." Erosians teach that truly evolved people understand that everyone is different. They also teach that, as long as you do no harm, you should be able to do whatever you want, with whomever you want. It teaches love and acceptance of all people.

Thus, the "Kingdom of Eroses" (KOE) was formed. There are now groups of Erosians (called groves or temples) in various parts of the country. I have put some of the teachings on line at PrisonsFoundation.org. (Search under "Mintun").

My primary goal is to empower people, in prison and out. I want people to learn - not just to accept others - but to accept themselves. This includes many things, but also includes your sexuality, age-of-attraction, etc.

Whatever your religion your gender your age (or age preference) your sexuality your whatever, YOU can make a decision to accept yourself, and help others to accept themselves. Maybe, in a couple of generations, people will discover that love and affection are good things. Personally, I believe we must learn true, unconditional, love for humanity to survive.

Petunia

TJ

“Camp Creepers” tend to be a problematic issue in almost every homeless community, in every type of climate: because “houseless” folks gather items to make their lives easier or more pleasant the same as anyone who owns or rents living quarters . . . because they tend to not have a secure place to protect these items . . . because they often have to travel to find food or work on a daily basis without being able to take these items with them . . .

‘Camp Creepers’ come in all shapes, sizes, colors. They come at all hours of the day or night. Sometimes they are simply curious, and sometimes they are devastatingly destructive. Usually they are mild to severely irritating thieves. They steal food and cooking utensils, clothes and coolers, tools and books, sleeping bags and cots, tents, backpacks and carts.

They are teenagers being teenagers. They are drug addicts and alcoholics looking for things to sell or pawn to pay for their habits. They are police detectives looking for whatever they’re looking for. They are curious tourists and do-gooders being nosy. Often they are animals or newly homeless folks looking for food or other items they feel they need to survive. They are ALL aggravating and can be taught to find what they need elsewhere.

With the exception of the police, most ‘Camp Creepers’ are dealt with by severe defensive posturing. This usually involves a weapon (and preferably a friend nearby) and the forceful removal of the creeper from the immediate environs with the admonishment not to return — at least, not in that particular line of thinking and action. Even homeless people are very protective of what little they have that makes life easier to bear. Often they are violently protective, as are most wild creatures. Even though I consider myself more easy-going than most homeless folks, I understand the creeper issue and tend to be less forgiving in that instance when I’ve been invaded. ‘Camp Creepers’ are not well tolerated, even by me, which is why . . .

It was late night, well after midnight as I was making my way back to my camp alone. I was in fine spirit, having spent most of the evening with friends, laughing, and the trip back to camp on this warm summer night was filled with stars, making the nighttime quite pleasant. The sounds and smells of my nocturnal excursion to the edge of town and wild had me in a

complacent reverie. I'd always enjoyed the feeling of departing "civilization" and slowly entering and becoming one with nature.

Having just this evening spent most of the earlier night hours in town with "normal" folks, I hadn't yet flipped into wild mode yet. At night in the semi-wild country it sometimes pays to be a bit noisy and human-sounding. This warns nearby creatures that a human is close by, and gives them a chance to hide or depart the area. While I wasn't exactly singing or humming to myself, I wasn't being overly particular about making noise by brushing against lower or dense growing foliage. As a general habit learned through years of outdoor living, the farther from population I move, and the closer to wilderness I get, the more I tend to be aware of my 'noise discipline.' Without even thinking about it I begin to walk more quietly, to avoid loose rocks and dry leaves, and as my night vision improves I scan my surroundings both farther out and more intensely close-up. It's a developed habit I don't think about much anymore. I just do it automatically.

One of the issues I consider when it comes to choosing my campsites is security. I've had my share of camp creepers, and I've had the same problem of not being able to secure my possessions; thus I tend to look for places to make hidden camps. No sense letting a known camp become a target for thieves or police intrusions. I try to use as much camouflage, cover and concealment as possible. This includes overhead views, egress and approaches to my camps. The quieter the trail in, the better I like it. This makes it easier to hear the noise traps I've set farther out. Any potential camp creepers, upon my return from non-camp activities, are much more easily discovered, usually long before I actually arrive at my current living area. Startling camp creepers, regardless of what kind, can be dangerous.

So, having walked the last 50 yards or so on sandy trail, with the lights of town almost half a mile behind me and actually mostly lighting my way, I was as silent as most of the quail that ran by my camp in the mornings. Then I heard it. Almost as quiet as myself, and cautiously quiet as most camp creepers are, when I reached the trail turn-off to my camp . . . the one that led down the embankment to the only camp in the vicinity . . . Yes. There it was again! Slight, quiet sounds of movement in my camp. Not NEAR it. IN it!

I was already stopped and listening on "high alert," so I prepared for "combat." One never knew for sure what a camp creeper might do when suddenly confronted. Most try to run away, or stammer profuse apologies while making excuses.

But some ARE brave, or desperate, or terribly scared. Battles CAN be vicious, so it's best, when a confrontation is imminent, to prepare as fully as possible beforehand. While crouching down, my senses were in full combat mode. My ears were picking up only the sounds of what SHOULD BE only one creeper . . . but that doesn't mean there might not be two or more. So I am looking for tracks to possibly tell me numbers of intruders and whether male or female. But because the trail led down an embankment, the lights of town cast my entire camp in total blackness. (Advantage: me. I know where everything was. Advantage: creeper. He/she/ it may have moved things or found my other weapon.)

I checked the very sharp knife on my belt, that it was clear and easily accessible. I felt around very quickly and quietly for a club-sized branch. (First swing, mine. If it breaks I have a projectile to throw, then I can go for the knife if I need to. But the first weapon should be something to discard if needed. It's possible, not likely, but possible it's a policeman.

Now, having a suitable club in hand, I quietly got out my small but powerful flashlight. I don't like flashlights as a rule. They broadcast location. But it's the best surprise technique for creepers. I get to do an immediate identification while temporarily blinding my potential opponent. Advantage: all me! If all goes well, I'll be within solid striking distance before I flip the light switch on.

Until then I've got about 30 feet of downhill trail on the sand to quietly approach on, one left turn and, if my hearing is correct, about 15 more feet before this solitary creeper will suddenly realize the very dangerous position he/she/it is now in.

. . . step by step

. . . quiet

. . . don't even breathe hard

. . . stop and listen.

Yes. Still sounds like just one, moving away from me, deeper into my camp. Harder for the creeper to escape. Has to come right at me, or break blindly into the heavy brush and trees when I flip the light on . . .

. . . slowly feel my feet, my path onward

. . . total concentration now

. . . closer . . . adrenaline . . . heart pulsing and pounding . . . closer . . . within striking distance . . . club up . . . light forward and up.

CLICK

I have never run from a camp creeper confrontation. My house, however primitive it may be, is mine to defend. It's no different than a bear den, a bird nest, a badger hole being protected by their owners.

—However—

In this instance . . .

The Powers-That-Be must have known. Princess Karma, Mother Nature and all the Little People and Faeries of the forest, already knew that I don't kill anything indiscriminately. I will kill to eat, or in defense of myself or friends. I will never do so with real malice in my heart, and never if I can avoid it.

The skunk that quickly skittered around and looked up into my light I recognized. She was the Mama with three babies that traversed above my camp early every morning, on the way to I don't know. Skunk school for little skunks? Maybe.

I had located her den within the first two days of my sojourn here after I spotted her leading her youngsters by my camp on the first, day. I had purposely gone looking because I didn't ever want to surprise her or her charges by accident. Thus far, we had avoided each other with respectful distance.

But now, maybe she had taken note that I feed the birds and the mama chipmunk. Maybe she had gotten used to me and realized I was no threat to her world. Maybe a combination of those, the smell of tasty crumbs, hunger pangs, and my lack of presence told her little skunk mind that she would be welcomed to whatever snacks I might have left out. Whatever.

We were now about four feet apart and locked in a stand-off. At this point I had to think VERY quickly and partly like a wild creature. For the moment I've got her "deer-in-the-headlights" style. Whatever it is that causes animals to freeze like this has happened to her. Advantage: me. I'm the considerably larger creature and she's in my space. Advantage: me. Then the situation begins to get mixed up.

Because it's my living area, I CANNOT be the one to retreat. If I do, she'll feel free to come back. I'm big enough to kill her, regardless of her defenses and she knows it, so she isn't going to want to turn her back to me to retreat. Night vision is her advantage. But for me to give her the opportunity to leave, I HAVE to turn off the light, AND STAND MY GROUND, without being threatening enough to make her use her noxious weapon, while still being convincing enough to her as reason for her to leave and never come back.

This is a ticklish situation at best. Obviously I know I'm not going to hurt her. She might even suspect this is so. But she's in my area, and even critters know when they are somewhere they aren't supposed to be. She can't be CERTAIN that I won't attack. Well, I've mostly been a 'peacemaker' my whole life. Now I'm about to find out just how good I am at it.

First, adrenaline down. Calm breathing. Animals can feel danger, even if it's defensive or mistaken posturing. Calm and quiet, yet in control, is the key to defusing this.

Alright. Club down. Hands down. Calm breathing; Aaaaannnd . . . Light off.

. . . Standing . . . looking at each other . . . the seconds tick by with no movement from either party. I have to break this stalemate, so, quietly but with control and force . . . “Go on now, Mama. This is my house. Go on. Git.”

I saw Petunia . . .

“Pepe Le Pew” from Saturday morning cartoons of my youth, just that quickly became a female version; Petunia Le Pew.

Petunia took a glance behind her to her right, then locked eyes on me again. I hadn't moved. More seconds ticked by. Again, “Go on Mama. I told you, this is my place. Go On!”

This time she gave a full look over her right shoulder and one small tentative step in that direction before locking eyes on me again. I was as still as a statue.

“It's all right. Go ahead. I ain't mad, but you gotta leave. Go on.”

Thankfully, this time she turned to her right, keeping a constant eye on me when she was three-fourths profiled away from me she stopped, looked back over her left shoulder to see that I wasn't moving or threatening, and “chuffed” once at me. To this day I don't know if that chuff meant “Jerk. You feed the others; Why not me?” or “Don't even THINK about moving or I'll blast you.”

I held still and held my ground until she had waddled to the edge of my camp by the backside of my tent. She looked back over her left shoulder one more time, locking eyes with me for a moment, then turned and trundled off into the night.

I spent the next day using small branches and vines and switches to weave a two foot high picket fence around my entire camp. Maybe Mother

Nature was trying to tell me that this particular Mama was a safe visitor as long as I acted in concert with nature as I had been doing — but I couldn't take the chance. Too often I had human visitors from town that might not understand her as I did. I actually felt bad building the fence. I knew she was only trying to find a meal that was easier to obtain than by her normal means. All mamas can use a break now and then.

Something must have changed for her as well. No longer did I see her strolling by my camp, up on the embankment with her brood. In fact, I only saw her once more, quite some distance off with her babies — but I like to think we still had a respect for each other. Even 30 yards away she somehow sensed my presence. I've been told a skunk's eyesight in the daylight is not very good. But I know she looked up where I was and looked right at me. She sniffed the air once or twice, looked at me again, and then very unhurriedly gathered her youngins and strolled off into the brush by the water that was out of sight there.

She was a beautiful creature.

Learning To Love

WL

I grew up in a small town in Georgia, in the 1970s and 1980s when gays were hated more than any other group. I have a much older half-brother and half-sister from my mom's first marriage. I was an only child from my mom's second marriage. My mother's third marriage brought seven older boys to our dysfunctional family. When I was two years old, my step-father adopted me and legally changed my name to his. The bad part about this was that I had just followed those seven monsters through school. My last name brought terror to the teachers I met. Because of this, they treated me badly before they knew me. In turn I acted out. The legacy my step-brothers left me was beyond repair.

Being the youngest of 10 children, I often found myself bullied. I learned to toughen up, but in that process, I became pretty mean. My mom was the town's accountant. She had her business office in the front of our home. This area was off-limits to the children.

In 1975, when I was 10 years old, my mom's secretary asked me if I could babysit her two boys, Karl and Philip, for a little over an hour after school every day. She would pay me 35 cents a day. Karl was almost four. He had the cutest blond hair I had ever seen. At first I mistook him for a small girl because his silky white face was so pretty and his mannerisms were feminine. Karl's older brother, Philip, had the same strange curly hair, but it was dark. He had green eyes and a very pale face – almost like he never went outside. Karl took a liking to me and that kind of freaked me out. I did catch him staring at me with his beautiful light-blue eyes. Sometimes we would watch Gilligan's Island reruns, or I would walk them to the local convenience store and buy us all candy with the 35 cents. I didn't really do much, I just tried to keep Philip from pummeling Karl. I treated these two boys like I always wished my older stepbrothers would treat me. I got along with Philip okay, but Karl just adored me. Maybe it was because I took up for him when Philip was mean to him.

On my last day with them, both Karl and Philip cried. Philip gave me a huge long hug that made me feel uncomfortable. I didn't think boys hugged. When Karl gripped me, he even kissed my cheek. As he stared at me with those beautiful eyes, I felt something in my chest hurt. His look was that of admiration. I had never seen anyone look at me like that before. Their mom took a job being a teacher in the town next to ours, so I wouldn't be able to see the boys again after that summer.

As the years progressed, I grew more violent. I was pretty mean to the teachers. At 12 years old, in the seventh grade, I was six feet tall and weighed 150 pounds. On the first day of school, my English teacher told me I should quit school like my brothers because I would never amount to anything. I gave her the finger and told her to fuck off as I exited her class. My only two pals that year were not really friends. I found out later that they hung around me only because they were scared I would bully them. It really bothered me when I learned I was considered a bully. I failed the seventh grade.

I was embarrassed on the first day of school my second year in the seventh grade. Not only did I get bigger, but the other kids were smaller. Some mistook me for a teacher. I also found out that one of my teachers from last year had retired. It was implied that I was the reason. I will say, in my defense, that she slapped me first. Mrs. D was my homeroom teacher. She was considered very mean and she only taught the honor classes. I was not in her class, just her homeroom. I'll admit I tried to get her angry with me but it didn't work. She actually saw something good in me – she was new, so she hadn't known my brothers. One day she asked me to stay after school. I thought I was in trouble. She asked me if it was true that I helped a boy named Charles the first week of school. I nodded.

Charles was a tiny boy for his age who was less manly than the other boys. He had freckles all over his face and brown hair and brown eyes. One of his eyes was already swollen by the time I got to the melee. Three bigger boys were kicking him and calling him gay, faggot and other names. I was still two heads bigger than the biggest bully. I pushed them out of the way and asked why they were picking on my friend. (I didn't even know him at that time.) And if they were calling him a fagot, that must mean they were calling me a faggot because I was his friend. The head bully informed me that he had a brother that was in the eighth grade and that if I messed with him, his older brother would kick my ass. I inquired about his sibling and then informed this bully to tell his brother my name. I knew his brother. His brother was also a bully but deathly scared of me.

A teacher sent us to the principal's office and, of course, it didn't look good for me right off. But after Charles told him how I had protected him, the principal actually apologized to me. He still warned me to stay out of trouble. Something strange happened after we left the principal's office. Charles stopped me and asked if I meant it when I said we were friends. Even with one eye puffy, the way his eyes were looking at me made me feel warm. It was the same way Karl had looked at me two years earlier. I

told him "Yes." He was my friend. After that incident, I actually started looking for bullies. I thought if I could change, maybe I could help them change. And if not, I could scare the shit out of them.

Mrs. D had heard about what happened through her top student, none other than Charles himself. Because of what happened, she could see some good in me where other teachers couldn't. She challenged me to do better in school and even offered a prize if I succeeded. She had already talked to my mother, to Charles and to his mother too. It was strange to hear that people said nice things about me behind my back. Mrs. D had lined it up that Charles would tutor me. Mrs. D was planning a Washington, D.C. trip for the top students in the seventh grade. Though I would never be a top student, she would make an exception just for me. The trip wasn't until late March for spring break so I had plenty of time to show my improvement. I do remember going to each teacher and telling them that I was turning over a new leaf and asking if they could help me when I was struggling.

A couple of teachers thought I was full of shit and let me know that they knew I would fail. I didn't get angry. I worked hard and Charles and I became very close. One teacher spotted us walking down the hall together and commented that I looked like I was in high school and Charles looked like he was in elementary school. The teacher just meant that we made odd friends, but Charles didn't like the jab.

Charles was the first boy who ever asked me to sleep over. He would sleep over at my house too. He had very high intelligence and his academic humor made me laugh. And my dirty jokes always made him blush and he would laugh way too loud. His mom would come and warn us about being up too late. At my house, we could be loud all night long as long as my stepdad was passed out from being drunk. We did play show and tell a couple of times, but never ventured past that. At 12, he didn't even have pubic hair. But I would encourage him not to worry about the size of his penis, that his would grow with time. Many times I would catch him staring at me with those eyes. I could tell he really admired me, yet his smarts were superior to mine. It seemed he looked up to me, but what he didn't know was that I held him in the highest respect. I really liked him. I looked up to him.

I did very well in school and pretty much stayed out of trouble. I found it funny that smaller boys would come up to me and tell me how "so and so" wouldn't stop picking on them. What I couldn't understand was that most of the bullies I encountered were very overweight, and couldn't even fight. They would use their size to terrorize.

Being bigger than most of the teachers, I could stop the bullies without any altercation. I would always feel bad at night when I would think how I had scared the bully. I didn't want anybody to be scared of me. I always had trouble sleeping on Sunday night before school on Monday. I would stay awake until one or two A.M. and then I would have an awful time in school on Monday. I told Mrs. D about this. She gave me this following suggestion that I even taught to my kids years later: *When you're lying in bed, try thinking about how you can better yourself the next day. If you were mean to anybody on Friday, try to be nice to them on Monday.*

Mrs. D taught me that "a friend is a present you give yourself". She explained how most of the seventh grade class respected me. More boys like Charles could use a good friend. If I could make new friends, not only would I be giving myself a present, but I would be giving my new friend a present as well. We all love presents, she explained to me. She challenged me to think of someone no one is nice to. Someone that might even be odd. I told her about Darren, but I told her he had an odor problem and everyone called him "Stinky." She just shrugged her shoulders and left it up to me. So I would stay up on Sunday night trying to give myself the nerve to make friends with Darren. Not just Darren, I would think of others too who I could be nice to. Within time, I could fall asleep at a decent hour on Sunday night. But I never stopped using this technique.

I slowly worked up the nerve to talk to him. Darren wore glasses that had white tape holding them together. His pants were too short and his shirt was badly worn out. He had short brown hair and was not ugly, just different. Geeky, maybe but I don't like labels. And he did smell. Mostly it was under-arm odor. When I approached him he acted scared of me. It was after school and we were waiting for our rides home. I knew he lived with his mom, but that was all I knew. That first day I just broke the ice and was nice. I can't remember anything that I said. I just remember he was skeptical about why I was talking to him, and he just nodded and never said a word. He was in the smart classes with Charles, so I barely saw him during the day except when we passed in the hallway. It turned out to be tougher than I thought. He acted so scared of me I felt uncomfortable talking with him. It did get to where he would tell me some things about his life, but it took a while. They were very poor and his clothes came from charities. His mom worked, but was on welfare. He never knew his dad and his mom was hardly ever at home.

He spent most of his time wrapped up in reading. He favored reading horror books. I asked him if he could spend Friday night with me and he actually asked "Why."

"That's what friends do," I answered. He had no comment to that. His mom was ecstatic that we invited him over. He had never had a friend before.

This may sound mean but I encouraged him to take a shower before bed. I couldn't handle the smell. When he came back into my room he was drying off with no clothes on. It didn't bother me and he didn't even seem to notice. His skin was pale white he had as much pubic hair as I did. If I hadn't known he was 12, I would have sworn he was 14 years old, looking at him naked. He caught me looking and I blushed. He put on clean white briefs and I handed him Right Guard deodorant spray. He didn't even know where to spray it. Since all of my siblings were gone by now, I picked the best bedroom left in the house. It had its own bathroom. I had a queen-size bed – hand-me-down from mom when they bought a new one. I had a walk-in closet that was full of clothes and shoes. We were not rich, I just outgrew clothes and shoes at an alarming rate. I couldn't even wear them out. At some point we had planned on donating them, but now the two of us held a fashion show with Darren as a model.

When we found clothes that fit him, they became his. It was funny watching him prance around the room showing his silly side modeling clothes. We set aside many shirts and pants and even shoes for him to pick up on his next sleepover. I didn't want his mom to feel we felt sorry for them and gave them a bunch of clothes. So he left with three pairs of pants and four shirts that first time. I told his mom that I had outgrown them and, if it was okay, I had more that he could have later. She didn't seem to mind. The best gift I gave him was a brand-new can of Right Guard. I told him to use it before school every day and people would stop calling him "Stinky." That name bothered him a lot because he couldn't smell himself.

I realized, with time, that he was one of my best friends. All because Mrs. D told me that "a friend was a present you give yourself". I thought it was so corny at first, but I made lots of new friends by introducing myself to the boys people made fun of.

Charles, Darren and I became close friends. Darren would not be able to go on the Washington D.C. trip because his mom couldn't afford it. But when all three of us would have a sleepover at Charles's house, he would help us plan what to visit. He so badly wanted to visit the Air and Space Museum that he got both Charles and me pretty excited, though it hurt my heart that he couldn't go.

By Christmas my excitement for the D.C. trip overwhelmed me. I couldn't stop thinking about it. I had never been this excited about anything before. My mom was paying for the \$130 trip. I had \$150 saved up. I was a very

frugal child and that stayed with me for life. I told mom of my plan to pay for Darren's trip to Washington, and she stopped that idea fast. She tried to explain to me that giving someone hand-me-down clothes was one thing, but if I tried to pay his way (no matter how nice it was) Darren's mom would be offended and could stop us from being friends. I never did understand that. No matter how much she explained, I couldn't understand why I wasn't allowed to spend my money on something that would make me happy. Mom was right, because later I offered to pay Darren's way into a movie and his mom was pissed. It's strange how pride can get in the way of friendships.

The Washington D.C. trip was the greatest thing in my life. I had an 8-mm movie camera which made me pretty popular with all the kids. Even the ones I barely knew became my friends. And I found out what girls like. I had never thought of that before. A couple of boys were telling me that they overheard Sheila and her friends talking about how cute I was. My face got so warm and red that Charles laughed at me.

Sheila was very pretty, but she was as short as Charles. I have a picture I'm looking at right now from that Washington trip. Someone stood at the front of the bus and took a photo of everyone in their bus seats. You can only see the top of Charles's head, barely. But I look like a very young baby-faced teacher. My head was taller than anyone else in the photo including the male chaperon. It was strange being so much taller than everybody else. I was thirteen years old and 6'1". I felt like a giant. This was not a good way to feel. It embarrassed me. The sad part is that I have very few memories of that trip to Washington D.C. Sheila did become my girlfriend and I really liked her. Mom called it love, but she was wrong. I think it had something to do with my ego – having the prettiest girl in the seventh grade like me.

I liked girls a lot. But I thought of boys when I jacked off. Sometimes I would force myself to think of naked girls when I masturbated to convince myself I was not gay. My next door neighbor James and I would sneak into the woods to fool around. At first it was to see who could come the quickest when we would jack off together. He was almost fifteen and his pecker was way bigger than mine, yet I towered over him in height. It wasn't long before we were performing oral sex on each other.

We could never have sleepovers with each other because our parents didn't get along. So we had a fort in a very wooded area that no one ever found. I will admit that I did not favor the taste of his sperm, but I did enjoy our excursions. It was a secret I never told anybody until now.

I was sad when I found out that Charles was moving to Alabama when school let out for the summer. Even worse, Darren's mom accused me of using him as my charity case. She yelled at me and said I felt sorry for Darren. She said Darren would never have friends because he was a reject like his dad, and that I only pretended to like him because I felt sorry for him. She was wrong. Darren was an awesome person and a great friend. But mom was right, I offered to help one time too many. When you're thirteen, you can't always see people's pride. I still saw him in the hallway, but Darren avoided me at all cost. The day I said goodbye to Charles really hurt. He thought so much of me. I didn't cry, but my eyes watered when I saw his eyes. He was crying but his eyes reminded me of Karl's three years earlier. Again, I wasn't sure what it was, but my heart hurt. I can still feel how warm his body felt as I hugged him goodbye. We swore we would keep in touch, and I think we did exchange two or three letters, but that was it.

Sheila and I broke up over the summer. In the eighth grade I had a string of girlfriends that I can't remember. Mrs. D asked me to do a presentation for the parents and children that would be going on the next Washington D.C. trip. I used the footage from my 8-mm to narrate our trip. Of course I would add my own humor to get the seventh-graders and their parents to laugh. When it was over, I answered questions. What it was like being a kid on that trip? One dad asked me why I didn't go again, like a guide for the kids. I told him it was only for seventh-graders. Mrs. D said she didn't know why she didn't think of that and asked me if I wanted to go again. In the end, I went on ten straight Washington D.C. trips for the seventh grade. When I was in the ninth grade, I was made a full chaperon. Even when I was in college, I would come back for the trip even if our spring breaks weren't the same.

We had a Trailways bus that stayed with us for the full week. All ten years we had the same bus driver: Mr. Jesse. He did all of the driving and helped out with the kids when he could. We would all meet at the school on Friday about 6:30 P.M. We would ride all night long on the bus and get into Chevy Chase, Maryland where we always stayed. When Greyhound bought out Trailways, Mr. Jesse worked for them and was still was our driver.

Early March 1984, I got a phone call from Karl. I was shocked to hear his voice. My first thought was what happened to Philip? But Karl was calling to tell me that he and John L, would be going on the D.C. trip later that month. I was so excited. "Oh my, Karl, that is so awesome! You should

consider being my assistant. Would you want to do that"? He told me he would.

It felt strange at first sitting with Karl because he tried to make sure our arms didn't touch. He seemed to be avoiding any contact, so I made sure I wouldn't cross any of his boundaries.

"Who's that silly looking boy across the aisle there with the goofiest grin I've ever seen?" I said to Karl as I pointed at the boy, now laughing at what I said. If someone had told me at that time that this boy later in life would marry my sister who was twelve years older than him, I would of never have believed it.

"That's my best friend Kell" Karl said.

John L spoke up from behind our seat that he thought he was Karl's best friend. It turns out that Karl had six best friends. As I looked over my group list I frowned. I went up and talked to Mrs. D and then I talked with another teacher and then returned to my seat. Karl asked what was wrong. I explained that Kell was not listed in our group and I went and made a change. Now Kell was in our group.

Kell's mom was one of my favorite high school teachers. Kell let me know I was one of her favorite students. Kell was a very good-looking dark-haired boy. He considered himself a lady's man that just hadn't scored yet. I called him Casanova. He had the cutest smile and always seemed happy. Two little dimples on each side of his face would light up the room when he smiled. He gave me a quick hug when he found out that I got him into our group.

I asked Karl about bed assignments and where he wished to sleep. He informed me Philip had told him everything and that he wanted to sleep in my bed. I thought to myself, I bet he didn't tell you everything. Our whole group was in seats that were near me. Steve was sitting with Kell. Behind them were Brian and Greg. Rob and John L set directly behind us. Greg was a very sweet kid. He wasn't chubby, but he still had a little baby fat. He had short brown hair. Greg was a devout Christian. Brian was a tall skinny kid with a long face and a nose that would be considered large. He also had an Adam's-apple that was very noticeable. Rob, sat directly behind me. He had the sweetest face with brown eyes that looked mischievous. He had blond hair that looked streaked with a darker color, almost like he dyed it with black streaks.

At the end of them there was little Steve, who slept with Kell. He never looked at me and he seemed very sad. He kept staring out the window and looked like he was fighting back tears. I waited until it got dark and I had

Karl switch seats with Steve, but I let him sit by the window. He was so small for his age. If I met him on the street, I would have guessed he was nine-years-old instead of being in the seventh grade. He was so freaking cute, I just wanted to hug him, but I could tell he was homesick. Most kids didn't get homesick until the second night, but I could read the signs. I knew he wouldn't say much, so I would do all the talking. Years ago, when I first came on this trip, I was pretty scared. I didn't have many friends and I really missed my mom. But I made some friends and I ended up being friends with my chaperon.

"Do you know much about me?" I asked. He nodded and I made a face. "How do you know about me?"

His tears stopped as he contemplated his answer "Philip told us at our camp-out last week," Steve said.

I wanted to know more about this camp-out they had, but I had to help Steve out first. "Can I call you Stevie?" He nodded. "Look Stevie, I'm here for you. I'll be a good chaperon. I promise you we will have lots of fun and most of all, I will be your friend.

"Can I sleep with you and Karl?" He asked. He must have overheard the two of us talking earlier. When I didn't answer he spoke up. "Philip told us how everyone crowded into both beds. I was hoping I could sleep with you."

How much did Philip tell them at this camp-out I wondered. "I would be fine with you sleeping with us. But keep that between us until we get to the hotel. I don't want anyone to feel pressured into sleeping where they don't want to. He was smiling a little and shook my hand before he went back to his seat. I heard him correct Kell by saying "call me Stevie".

Karl explained to me later that Steve was worried about sleeping alone on a pullout bed when all of the fun would be in the big beds. When Karl found out about our bed-mate he warned me about little Stevie's problem. Apparently when he stays over at his friend's house, he likes to jack off. He has been caught doing it at every sleepover. They called him a serial wanker. Philip had been more shy talking about things like that, but Karl was different. He was very honest and open about any subject. I could tell I was starting to really enjoy his company. I was scared to get too close to him because I knew, once we were back home, we would have to go our separate ways. My plan was to be the best friend I could to him without it hurting too much when we would part. I convinced myself I was doing it for him, but deep down I knew my heart couldn't take another crushing blow.

After our first day of sightseeing, I was pretty beat. I had noticed the boys in our group all looked up to Karl. Normally on these trips I would feel close to two or three boys, but I noticed all seven boys hung on to my every word. I realized I was no longer that kid chaperon that was immature. I was now a man chaperon that they considered their friend. John L and Kell seemed to gravitate towards me on the first day more than the others. Karl and Stevie treated me more like a big brother. I was grateful for that. Greg considered himself our pastor and took it upon himself to help save our souls. Instead of him annoying us, he brought us joy with his beautiful smile. Robin and Brian were the silly pranksters. John L was what others would call homely-looking. I don't want to say he was ugly because my definition of ugly has nothing to do with looks. He also had problems with acne, but to me he was as beautiful as Karl: he had such a kind heart and knew so much about everything. I remember thinking that he would grow up to be a therapist or a teacher. He was not big on horseplay and did not like being touched. Kell liked to look at all the pretty girls and smile and wave at them. I'm not even sure he cared about the beautiful monuments. One girl, about 20-years-old, told him how cute his dimples were. His face turned red and he was speechless.

After a very long day, we were all dog-tired back in our room. After showers and dinner, it was time to relax, lying on our beds. The boys were actually quiet. Most of them were super-tired. Stevie lay on one side of me and Karl on the other. "Do you care if I sleep in your bed too?" Kell asked. After I agreed, he slept on the other side of Karl. Then the great migration started. Greg, Brian and Rob took the other bed. John L wanted to sleep alone on his roll-away bed.

Someone asked me to tell a story. In my bed, Stevie lay on his side facing me and hugging my arm. He was so tiny I hoped I wouldn't roll over and smush him in my sleep. Karl and I lay on our backs with our arms and sides touching each other. I loved the feeling of Stevie holding on to me and Karl's warmth. "I have a better idea: why don't you guys tell me a story. I'd love to hear how the camp-out went last week with Philip."

It was quiet for a moment then Karl spoke up. "Philip said that you allowed everyone to sleep where they wanted to, so we voted ahead of time that if you let us, this is where we would sleep. Except for Stevie, he was going to sleep alone because of his problem."

"Hey, I don't have a problem," Stevie interrupted".

"Philip also told us about how you told them a friend was a present you give yourself." Karl added.

Greg spoke up. "Philip said you were the best friend he ever had".

All was quiet until John L broke the silence. "I know it's none of my business, but do you love him as a friend?" Karl's hand slid into mine. I explained to everyone that I wasn't sure what love was and that I have just recently learned to say it.

I thought most of the boys had dozed off during my story, but I could hear little Stevie crying. I pulled him closer to me and I could feel his body quiver as he stifled his sobs.

"So do you love Philip"? Karl asked.

I squeezed his hand tighter "Yeah, I do." Karl rolled on his side and hugged me. He patted Stevie on his back as they both tightened their grip. "I love you Larry" Stevie mumbled

"I love you too Stevie". I really meant it.

"Philip was right, you are the best," Karl said.

Early the next morning, Rob asked me if I felt Stevie jerking off. Stevie rolled his eyes and explained to me that he got caught one time at Kell's house and they never let him live it down. Kell responded that Yes it was one time but it took him 30 minutes to finish." I explained that it was natural to do this and that they should go easy on Stevie. Someone asked me if I ever did it, I joked that I did it three times last night. Stevie punched me in the arm.

He admitted that when he met up with me again two years earlier, he felt a closeness to me that he couldn't explain. I told everybody that one of the reasons I liked working with kids was because of Karl. I looked into Karl's eyes again and my heart felt warm. They were so beautiful.

I do remember the very next morning passing by the bathroom and Stevie was getting ready to play and he shook his thing at me and asked what I thought. "Very impressive" I said. He was so cute.

Out of all the Washington D.C. trips I took, this night was my most memorable.

It was very quiet as we all lay snugly in the two beds. John L decided to sleep by Stevie on the edge of the bed. So it was John L., Stevie, me, Karl and then Kell. It was a tight fit, but everyone knew that it would be the last night we would all spend together.

Stevie embraced me tightly and asked me to look into his eyes. "Can you see it Larry?" He asked. I stared into his eyes, but did not know what he was asking. "You know, what you saw in Karl's eyes all those years ago." I

hugged him hard and whispered that I did. Someone yelled "Group hug," and all the boys piled on our bed trying to hug me and each other. I was attempting to make sure little Stevie wouldn't get squished, when I heard John L say he loved me. My heart almost stopped. Out of anybody in the world I would never have guessed he would say that. By now Karl had crawled on top of me and had my arms pinned down as I lay on my back. "I hope you know how great you are," he said and then Brian knocked him over onto Kell. After the three boys went back to the other bed, I told them of how Philip and I had slept in the same bed and then later we became best friends. Nobody cared that he was in the seventh grade and I was in the eleventh grade.

Karl mentioned that his grandma Mimi didn't like it.

Once everything was quiet, we all fell asleep. It had been a long week. I woke up in the middle of the night. Someone had his hand inside my briefs exploring. It took me a moment to realize it was Stevie. He ran his fingers through my pubic hair and then massaged my balls. He ran his hand up and down my boner, pulled his hand out, hugged me and went to sleep.

It was never mentioned, so, in my mind, it never happened. Stevie sat with me on the bus ride home at Karl's request. He knew Stevie would be happy. It was a very long bus ride and I told Stevie story after story about my life. He was right, I could see it in his eyes. It was love, I was sure.

After that D.C. trip, I flew back to Texas to see if I could enroll in summer classes. I called Stevie from Texas. It was the first time we had talked since we said goodbye. I was lucky he answered the phone.

He seemed very distant while he talked to me. Almost like she was scared of me. It really hurt my heart because I didn't know what I had done wrong. When we said goodbye, no one said "I love you." I had found out later that Stevie had expressed his true feelings about me to his parents. They were not happy and forbade any contact with me. I feel lucky I at least got to talk to him that one last time.

I now know that I loved Philip and I decided I would tell him when I saw him. He had told me when he was drunk that he loved me. He had told others at that camp out that he loved me. I wanted him to know what he meant to me. The university did not work out so I was back home in Georgia.

I spotted Philip at my old hangout, the Mini Foods convenience store – the same store I walked him to when I was ten years old. Though I didn't live down the road any more, a friend of mine named Darlene worked there, so

I frequented the store. I joined Philip, and we chatted about Texas. He told me how Karl talked non-stop about the D.C. trip. He told me he would give anything to go again. A friend of his named Max was across the street at the drugstore and was calling for him to come on. As they walked away I remembered what I wanted to say. "I love you Philip" I muttered. He turned back and asked what I said and I just shook my head. I think he knew what I said.

I went back to Texas to live with my aunt. I did not return to college. I worked as a bouncer for a nightclub. I think I was still heartbroken about Philip, so I got as far away as I could. I called Philip's house for Christmas to wish them a Merry Christmas. But Karl talked to me instead. Philip had serious issues with his mom and moved in with his grandmother, Mimi, next door. Karl asked me if I missed Stevie and I explained that I missed all of them – that Stevie needed more of my attention than he did but I cared for him just as much as I cared for Stevie. Again, I couldn't say love.

Karl gave me Mimi's phone number and told me to call Philip over there. I told him I might, but I didn't want to talk to Mimi. She was pretty evil to me. She always made me feel bad about myself.

I came back to my hometown for the Washington D.C. trip. I was excited that Mrs. D was actually allowing John L to return. I had decided he would be my assistant this year. I was at Mini-Foods visiting Darlene, when Philip spotted me and waved to me. He was at the drugstore with Mimi but ran across to see me. She was driving that green Cutlass Supreme. I hated that car. Every time I saw it, I knew it was her.

I warned him about Max, his older friend. I knew he loved Max but I had to say something. He told me that he knew he shouldn't be doing the things he was doing but he couldn't stop. His face had aged so much and he looked so tired. Mimi blew the horn to get him to leave me. After he was gone, I realized I forgot to tell him that I loved him. Every word we said that day will be etched in my mind until I die. The very next day we left for Washington D.C.. It was late March, 1985. That same night Mimi loaned Max her ugly green Cutlass Supreme, and it took Philip out of our lives forever. I think Philip was 15 and Max was 18 when he crashed into the side of a vacant brick building.

Max was pretty messed up on drugs and alcohol and his speed had topped 100 mph when they crashed. Max only had scratches and bruises. The engine of the car landed on Philip's back. He did not die right away. Philip's stepdad was the paramedic that put him into the ambulance. Philip kept begging him to stop the pain. His last words were "please stop it from

hurting." I always wished his step-dad had made up a story for Philip's mom by saying that Philip's last words were that he loved his mom.

That was the Friday night that I had left for D.C.. The next night we were told of the accident. John L and I cried all night long together. That was the worst D.C. trip I ever had. I can only hope I was kind to all those kids. I had a way with masking my sadness.

Philip's funeral was the day before we got back from D.C.. Up to that point in my life, I had never experienced a death in my family or of any friends. His death was very hard on me. I did not take it well. My mom helped me out as I went through a dark patch of my life. I couldn't really work. College was not a consideration. For some reason I could not will myself to visit Karl or his mom. I went to the cemetery every chance I got. Philip's grave was right next to the dirt road so I could park my car and leave the radio on for him.

I had very long talks with Philip as I cried during my graveside visits. I told him how much I loved him. It seemed every time I would visit him, the radio was playing "Missing You" by Diana Ross or "Night Shift" by the Commodores. Both songs were tributes to the late Marvin Gaye. For the rest of my life, including now, every time I hear one of those songs, I feel Philip's presence and my heart feels warm. Of course I keep both songs on my MP3 player and I'm listening to them right now 33 years later.

Every time I asked Philip for a sign to show me he was there with me at his graveside, a huge wind would rise up out of nowhere. It was unbelievable. I know now that it was probably coincidence, but you would have never convinced me of that back then. When the wind would blow through me, it felt as if he was hugging me. I would see Philip's mom drive by and if she saw me at the cemetery, she would keep going and never stop. When I would drive by and see her and Karl visiting I kept driving. I don't know why I couldn't stop. I picked up the phone to call them so many times, but I couldn't dial the number. I still had the phone number memorized. I drove by their house literally hundreds of times, but couldn't pull into their driveway.

I think I wanted to punish myself for not trying harder to keep Philip as my close friend when Max came along. In my defense, I always believed in free-will. One could choose. But I had trouble accepting this at that time. I felt I was to blame as much as Max. One day after passing by Karl's house, I saw John L waiting for me to pull into his driveway about two blocks past Philips house. With that, I rekindled my close friendship with John L and another former friend, Tam. I spent every Friday and

Saturday night at their house so I wouldn't have to be by myself way out in the country.

I planned a big camp-out to celebrate school's ending for the summer. I talked John L into inviting Kell and Karl. Kel said yes and Karl declined. It had been two months since Philip's death and Karl rarely left the house except for school. My heart burned to talk to him. I sometimes felt I was using John L and Tam just to be closer to Karl, even if I never saw him. I loved both Tam and John L and and told them on many occasions how I felt. I would never let pride stand in my way. If I loved someone and I felt it in my heart, I would say it to them. I never knew when it would be the last time I saw someone and I wanted them to know I loved them if they never saw me again.

Right after the camp-out I was at Tam's house when his phone rang. He yelled for me to answer it. No one would speak when they heard my voice. "This is Tam and John L's phone, Larry speaking" I squawked. It was Karl, he was mumbling that he knew it was me but he couldn't tell he didn't want to talk to me. It was the same feeling I had had when I last talked to Stevie on the phone a year earlier. My heart broke as I sat there with my whole body numb. A part of me wanted to keep him on the phone, but I knew that was wrong. I could tell he tried to sound upbeat and so did I. "Tam, John L and I are going to the movies tonight. I was hoping you could go with us."

He used the excuse that he didn't have money. I told him I was paying for John L and Tam. I could pay for him. We also planned to go by the Dairy Queen and grab some burgers and snacks and take them to the movie. That also would be on me. He then said his mom probably wouldn't let him go.

"Put her on the phone, I'll ask her for you." For a moment I felt like fighting for his friendship.

He told me to hold on a second. He was actually considering it. "I'll ask her, let me call you right back," Karl said as he hung up. I thought I had lost him.

To this very day, no other night meant more to my life in that night. I can't even remember the movie we saw. It wasn't important, the best part was it was my reconnection with Karl. He was very silly as we sat in the front seat of my Mazda GLC. I could tell this thirteen-year-old had never gone out with the boys, except for when I took him to the Macon Mall when he was 10 years old.

We never mentioned Philip while we were out that night. Karl had planned for me to spend the night with him, but didn't ask me until we dropped off

Tam and John L. His mom wanted to talk with me. I was glad Mimi wasn't there.

Karl took off to his room to set me up a pallet on the floor, since I said no to the offer of sleeping in Philip's old bed. That left me and Karl's mom alone. I couldn't look her in the face. I was sure I'd break down and cry. "Why didn't you come by?" she asked. "Why didn't you give me a call on the phone?" She continued. "I've loved you like a son since you were 10 years old. I'd do anything for you."

I burst out crying then we hugged as we cried together. "When he started hanging out with Max, I could of stopped him, I could have fought for his friendship, I should have done something. It's my fault," I cried.

She told me how she felt it was her fault for letting Mimi talk her into taking her rebellious teenage son. It was her fault for not being a stronger mom. After our cry session, I slept on the floor in Karl's room. When all got quiet in the house he started punching me. He called me some mean names. The worst was coward. He said he had waited for me to visit when I got back from D.C.. Night after night he wished I would come over and help him with his grief. He was so busy helping his mom, he needed someone, and I was the only person who would have understood his pain. He said we should have grieved together. Instead I was a coward to avoid them.

After he calmed down, he hugged me until he went to sleep. After that night, I could look in his eyes again and see his love. Only this time, we would tell each other how much we loved each other every time we saw each other. When I spent time with Karl, I felt a tenderness in my heart that I never wanted to go away. It did make it tough at my job. When we both looked back at our relationship later in life, we realized we were more than just friends. But when he was thirteen years old and I was twenty, everyone thought we were just friends. Only Mimi tried to stop our friendship.

Most of my friends were 15, 16 or 17 at that time. I was considered pretty cool. I'd hate to think of what they would call me today if I were a 20-year-old with a thirteen-year-old friend. Karl and I became inseparable and you never saw one of us without the other. Karl was the first boy to ever kiss me on the lips. He wanted to French kiss but I told him I had a saliva phobia and wouldn't even kiss my girlfriend like that. I turned 21 years old July 11, and he turned 14 on July 29. We had a big birthday party planned. All of his friends and all of mine. After that party we talked about Philip. Karl pulled out a pack of brand-new burgundy briefs, still in its original

package, and showed them to me. It was Philip's Christmas present to him seven months earlier.

Philip's posters of bikini-clad women still lined his walls. His mom had never washed the sheets or blankets. Philip's side of the room remained exactly as he left it when he moved in with Mimi. His dressers were as he left them. Karl told me he never looked through Philip's stuff because he was afraid he might find drugs. I explained how unlikely this was. Karl asked if I would help go through some of Philip's things. I didn't really want to rummage through my friend's private things but Karl had asked. We found some rolling papers, condoms and two dollars in change in his sock drawer. We found two letters from Max in another drawer that neither of us cared to read. I did see a heart drawn with "I love you, Max." Yeah, I didn't want to read that. I found out later that Karl threw them away. I never knew if he read them first.

It was probably six months after we became inseparable that Karl walked into his room and leaned on his door jamb with a goofy smile. I was sitting on the floor looking at a book. When Karl had this mischievous smile, it meant he had a question about sex. "Spit it out Karl, you know I'll answer anything."

"It's embarrassing" he informed me.

"Karl, we kissed on the lips. There isn't anything too personal for us to discuss. Please ask me, I'm here for you."

He stuttered for a few moments and then asked me if I had ever measured my thing.

I did everything I could to keep from laughing. I knew he was being serious so I kept my giggles in check. "Look Karl when I was your age and older, I measured my dick every day. Now I didn't keep a chart like that kid from the Porky's movie. So have you been measuring yours?" I asked.

He nodded.

I held my hands out, as if to say, "Well? "

"It was 7 inches" he answered.

My mouth dropped open. I didn't see that coming. I told him I thought he was measuring it wrong. He offered for me to come and help measure it in the bathroom. This was the first time that I had seen his penis since he was three years old. I told him to get it hard so we could get a proper measurement. So he let me measure it, and it was 7 1/2. He then measured mine, and it was 6 1/2. I wasn't embarrassed because mine was smaller. I

was just surprised because I had never thought of his dick before. He asked me why it was wet on my peehole. Those were his words. I explained to him about pre-cum. After I explained I realized I was admitting that I was excited. Nothing else happened that day. A week later he was staying with me out in the country. We slept in a single bed.

Karl told me he knew a way we could even be closer friends. I knew what was on his mind, I could feel it on my thigh as he hugged me. "I'll do you first and then if you want to, you can do me," Karl said. I thought he was talking about jacking each other off. But no, he was referring to oral sex. I think I was more shocked than anything. When it was my turn to do him, he said he would pull it out before he came. Even though I didn't like the taste, I shook my head no. I didn't favor large ones, but I liked his because it was him. That same night, I let Karl teach me how to French kiss. I never did get over my saliva phobia, but I would do anything for him. Well, not everything. He wanted to have anal sex but I explained how I had been damaged back there before when I was eight and nine years old and I never wanted to do it again. He respected that.

I was driving back from Macon on the interstate doing 55 mph when Karl decided it was a good time to give me oral sex. I almost wrecked. He would sneak out of church on Sunday morning to meet me at my mom's office in town. Small towns shut down on Sunday's. Karl's church was three blocks away. I always felt guilty because he wanted to do it while he was supposed to be in church. When we went camping with other friends, he would wait until they were asleep and then slide under the blanket. Way out in the country on a side dirt road was his favorite place. It was like he enjoyed the danger of our possibly getting caught.

Karl's best friend that was a girl was also my good friend. She was tiny like Stevie but she was 15 years old and sexually active. She stopped by my mom's office one Friday night when I was all alone. I laid on my back as she writhed on top of me. We had our clothes on. She was just wrestling. She shocked me when she asked "Are you and Karl having sex?" Oh my God, I wanted to tell her so bad. I needed someone in addition to Karl to talk to. We both loved her equally.

"Did you ask Karl?" I mumbled.

She nodded.

"What did he tell you?" I asked.

"Karl said no".

I told her I couldn't go against anything he said.

"Are you gay Larry?" It was the first time anyone had ever asked me that question.

"Why do you ask me that?"

She thought about it then said "I've been bouncing up and down on your dick and you haven't gotten hard." She even started rubbing my crotch with her hand.

"Well Karen, I love you as a friend. I think you're so beautiful, but I don't label what I am because I'm not sure myself." What Karen didn't know was I really wanted to have sex with her, but Karl had just left 15 minutes earlier and I was never able to do it twice in that short of a time period. I never got the chance to do it with her in the future either.

For almost two years Karl and I were never seen without each other. All of his smart friends became friends with all of my other friends. Only Mimi was against our friendship.

This was 1986 and in a small town in Georgia. No one thought it was strange that a 15-year-old boy was best friends with a 22-year-old. One night when Karl was with me in my bed, he was staring at me. "Can you see Larry, can you see the love I have for you is real?" He asked.

I looked into his eyes and I could see the same eyes that stared at me when he was three years old. "Yes, Karl I can see. I hope you can see I will love you until the day I die." And 32 years later I still mean it.

Karl will always be my one and only true love. He started teaching me about love when he was three years old. He wrote me many letters while I've been in here. His name is still listed on my visiting list. He left San Francisco and headed back to Georgia for a visit. He promised to visit me on his way back to California.

For some reason, he stayed in Georgia and never wrote me again.

He was attending sign language college in Georgia when he died at 38 years old on January 10, 2010. I never found out how he died. When my mom passed away 10 months later that same year, I got to talk to my sister and Kell on the phone for a short time. Kell told me he thought Karl had committed suicide, but I never found out if that was true. After Mama's will was settled, Debbie and Kell wouldn't have anything to do with me anymore.

Melba (Karl's mom) wrote me once after his death. She hinted that I may have harmed Karl when he was young. She wanted to know about him and me. I mailed her three letters that Karl had written me while I was in prison. Karl was not a religious man. He felt that Christians put gay people

on a cross and tortured them. He talked about wanting to take his own life when he was 11 and 12 years old because he knew then that he was gay. The church taught him that he would be put to death so he wanted to kill himself. I didn't judge him for his flaws and he believed I had saved his life from suicide.

I asked her to write me back and tell me how Karl died. She never wrote back to me.

Karl's favorite Bible verse was Proverbs 17:17: *A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.* It was about Philip and me.

Long Distance Love

SC

I had been a 4th grade teacher for about three years when my heart was stolen by an adorable Cupid. There had been other students who had caught my eye and who had presented opportunities for sexual mischief, but I had never acted on those opportunities. I was proud of my self-control and loved my job. The school principal made things even harder for me because she thought I was the perfect male role-model. Therefore, all of the fatherless boys and disciplinary problems landed in my classroom. Also, after my first year, many parents requested that I be their child's teacher because of my earlier success with a previous child of theirs. I was very popular in the community and my students tended to perform very well on the state standardized test.

Then the third year happened. It started out fairly normally, but by October, one student had separated himself from the pack. Aaron was streetwise, and mature beyond his years. His behavior was more like that of an eighth or ninth-grader. He was very confident and always took responsibility not only for his actions but for others' as well. He was always friendly, outgoing, and most important of all, he was very affectionate toward me. He seldom showed any frustration and never acted angry. His grades were average but his warm personality won me over fairly quickly. He was always placing his hand on my shoulder if I were sitting down and he came to ask a question about an assignment. Sometimes he would just walk up for no apparent reason and give me a close hug from the side.

He started staying after school in my classroom along with his little brother Alex who was in third grade. Classes dismissed at 3:40 PM. Teachers could leave at 4 PM. Many students stayed late just because they didn't want to go home, or they stayed for the extra attention. This was normal throughout the school so nobody thought it was strange when Aaron and his brother started staying behind. I would take them home after school. After a month or so of this, Aaron invited me in to meet his parents. Dad was an alcoholic who would abandon the family for months at a time and the mom worked all day until around 7:00 P.M. So, I went in and met them on the rare occasion that they were both at home.

I didn't care for the dad at all, and he didn't care about anything but his beer. There was also another brother, a toddler, running around butt-naked and crazy. The mom and I hit it off really well. She thanked me for

looking out for her boys after school and making sure they got home safely. Without me, they had to walk home every day, even in bad weather. She remarked on how they both told her so much about me and she encouraged me to spend as much time with them as I wanted to in the afternoons. I started hanging around their house for a little bit when dropping them off. Also, I would take them with me shopping. If I saw a need such as their shoes being worn out and such, I would spoil them just a little. Money was not a problem for me like it was for them.

It was during these times when other students or adults weren't around, that Aaron started getting really affectionate. He tried to stand as close as possible to me or, if I were sitting, he would stand where he was leaning over my shoulder or back. He was doing everything possible to cause as much physical contact as possible without being blatant about it. As a boy-lover, this was driving me crazy, but I behaved myself around Aaron and resorted to relieving the tensions with Old Faithful "Rosie Palm" when I was alone at home. Aaron started calling me a lot. Sometimes he would call me after I left his house so quickly that I hadn't even arrived home yet. He called especially on weekends. It was happening enough to be annoying, so I asked him why he was calling me so much. I asked if there was something wrong or if he didn't feel safe at home with just him and Alex there. He responded by saying he just wanted to talk to me or that he missed me already. That made me feel loved and appreciated. Aaron did not appear starved for attention when others were around, but when alone with me, he acted like he was iron and I was a magnet. He was glued to me by proximity or phone.

The boys spent Christmas with their grandparents and Aaron couldn't call because of the long-distance charges. It was a quiet two weeks for me, and I found myself actually missing Aaron's phone calls. I caught myself thinking of him and realized just how much I cared for him. As soon as he got home from his grandparents, he called and talked my ear off. His mom got on the phone and told me that I had been such a good influence on her oldest son. Then she said something that really surprised me. She said "He absolutely loves you. If I didn't need him to babysit his two brothers, I would insist that you adopt him. It's obvious that you two belong together." One, that did not sound very loving of the mother. Two, that told me that she knew he had feelings for me and didn't seem alarmed at all by it.

Up to this point, I had behaved myself admirably, but when school started back in January, something happened to change all of that. I had a digital camera that I sometimes used at school. The kids loved seeing their

pictures on the computer screen. One day, Aaron asked to borrow the camera for the evening. He had already mastered its functions playing around with it after school. I asked him what he wanted it for and he replied "just to play with and have fun." I wasn't worried about his damaging it because he was very responsible. So, I granted him his wish. He didn't call that evening, which was unusual. At school the next morning, I asked Aaron if he remembered to bring my camera back. He said "Yes, but I want you to wait and see the pictures I took later. I want to keep them in my locker until you take us home." I thought that was odd but really didn't give it much thought, as the day was very busy as usual. I took the boys home and he gave me the camera to take with me. Soon after getting to my house, I uploaded the pictures to my computer.

I was absolutely shocked, yet thrilled, with what I saw. I was expecting pictures of the boys and their mom along with snapshots of the house, yard, etc. Instead, I saw things that almost caused a heart attack. My pulse must've reached at least 150. Every single picture was of him either partially or completely nude. He had made expert use of the time delay to pose and take pictures of every square inch of his body. Several showed arousal, with him playing with himself. While I was taking all of this in, the phone rang. You already know who was calling. Right away he asked if I've looked at the pictures yet. I said "Yes," and then proceeded to ask why he took that kind of pictures.

He asked, "Are you mad?"

"No" I replied. "I just didn't expect this. Why did you want me to see these pictures." Silence from his end. Then I could tell he was crying and I could just imagine the huge tears in his beautiful brown eyes. He choked a few sobs and said "I've done everything I can to make you love me and nothing has worked. I thought if you saw the pictures you would like me more and maybe even love me." I was stunned and a little choked up myself.

I told him I was not mad and that I needed a little time to think.

We hung up and I raced for my car. I drove the 15 miles to his house in record time. I knocked and went in. My first concern was where was Alex, the little brother? Aaron told me he was down the block at a friend's house playing Nintendo. I grabbed Aaron in a bear hug and told him how much I really loved him and that I always had. I stressed to him that most people would not approve of this and that I could go to jail just for having those pictures. We had a good long talk and he assured me he knew all about this kind of thing, and that he was sure about how he felt towards me. I

held him some more and kissed him on the cheek before leaving. I made sure he knew I was not mad and that I loved him too.

The next week or so, I spent a lot of time in contemplation and in discussing things with Aaron. I kept wondering how someone that age could be so precocious or even know how to pose like he did. I learned that he saw how to pose by watching TV, especially music videos. He insisted that he wanted to do some very intimate things with me. When I scoffed and told him he didn't know what he was asking for, he shocked me some more. Apparently, he had been "playing around" and "having sex" with other older boys and that he definitely knew what he liked.

At some point, he asked if I would take pictures of myself like he had taken. I had been convinced by him enough to reply "Why look at pictures when we can see and have each other? We just have to be careful." Aaron was all for that. I'll shorten this by leaving out all of the titillating details. Aaron spent several weekends and a couple of holidays with me the rest of that semester. We did everything he wanted to try. We were both learning and often got ideas by watching videos posted in newsgroups on the Internet. Also, we both enjoyed reading stories from the "Nifty Archive" on the Internet. Some of these stories fueled our curiosity and growth together.

Sadly, his mother decided to move back closer to her family, since she still owned a house there. It was almost 200 miles away! Thus, we continued a long distance love affair. I called Aaron at least once a week, and he called me two or three times a week, using calling cards I had bought him. For the next two years, he would stay with me on longer holidays and at least a week each month during the summer breaks. He was present on all of my vacation trips. My friends, family, and co-workers often saw Aaron and me together in public. Both of us made sure not to do anything to arouse suspicion when others were around. Many people commented on how happy Aaron and I were when together. They often commented saying things like "You two belong together" and similar statements. People did not see any signs of sexual abuse because it was a mutual relationship based on love. The only anomaly from any other gay relationship was the age-difference. I am a fairly small, skinny adult so by our third year, Aaron was taller than me. Emotionally, he and I grew even closer, if that is possible, as he grew older and matured both mentally and physically.

Over the next few years, I often questioned what we were doing and would ask Aaron very specific questions. He always assured me that he did not feel bad or guilty about our intimacy. In fact, he often did little

things that put me at ease. There were several situations that stand out in my memory and I would like to share a few with you.

The most upset Aaron ever got towards me was the first trip we took together. We were going to spend a few days seeing the sights around Colorado Springs. As soon as we walked into our hotel room he gave me a dirty look, put both hands on his hips and continued giving me the stink-eye. "What's wrong?" I asked.

He pointed to the two beds and said, "Why did you waste of money for the extra bed? I'm sleeping with you!"

This made me laugh and I told him, "I wouldn't have it any other way. This way looks better to the hotel staff who will assume one of the beds is for you." I was amused but also comforted by his insistence in such situations. We always kept both beds messed up to maintain appearances for the hotel staff that trip and all subsequent vacations.

Here's another example of something Aaron did that I'll always remember. One day I traveled the 200 miles to pick him up for the weekend. We were leaving his city and getting back on the interstate when he did something that almost cause me to wreck. He was sitting in the front passenger seat and just pulled his sweat pants and underwear down. At the same time he pulled them down, he practically yelled at me, grinned, and said, "Look who's happy to see you!" His dick was sticking straight up in all of its glory and it looked just as happy as the huge smile on Aaron's face. I loved it, but told him to pull his pants back up because tall pickup trucks and large trucks can offer a view point exposing him to a passing motorist. He covered up but remained mischievous and frisky the whole drive to my house. Take my word for it; that was a long and sleepless night. We hadn't seen each other for over a month and Aaron was making up for lost time.

Another incident that stands out in my memory shows his tender sweet side. I was feeling under the weather one day and told him I needed to take a little nap. So I went to my bedroom and lay down. He came in and lay down next to me as close as he could get. He wasn't smiling or being playful so I grew concerned and asked, "Are you all right?" I was lying on my stomach and so was he. Aaron grabbed my right arm and draped it over his back. Then he put his left arm over my lower back and tucked his face into the pillow right next to mine. Then he finally answered me and said, "Now I'm all right!" We both slept like that for hours.

Sex was never the basis or sole focus of our relationship. It was the little things like I just shared, and simply being together that we both needed and cherished.

Like they say, all good things must come to an end. U.S. Customs raided my house and arrested me in 2002. Aaron and I had met a man in a boy-love chat room. We had both talked to this man about our relationship using ICQ. When this man was arrested, the police seized his computer and found some incriminating discussions. This guy ratted like crazy and made a bunch of stuff up, like claiming that he and I traded pictures and stuff. The feds swooped in to get me and found pictures and videos of Aaron and me on my computer. They admitted they could find no pictures or videos of Aaron on the rat's computer, nor could they find any on the Internet. That's because I never shared pictures or videos of us with anyone!

I was given 14 years in federal prison for possession of child pornography and sexual exploitation of a minor. This was done on a plea-agreement. Soon after starting my federal sentence, Texas charged me with five counts of aggravated sexual assault of a child. I claimed double jeopardy but my public defender was worthless. Aaron and his mom both testified on my behalf. When the prosecutor asked the mom what she wanted to happen to me, she replied, "The state has hurt us more than Mr. _____ ever did. We never wanted him to go to jail. We didn't ask for any of this. If anything, I would suggest that he not be allowed to work in a supervisory position over children in the future." The judge didn't care and sentenced me to serve life in Texas prisons.

Almost 14 years passed with no word from Aaron. I was heartbroken and worried about him. I kept wondering why I hadn't heard from him, especially after he reached adulthood and could do whatever he wanted to.

Aaron had tried to reach me several times over the years only to be scolded and have his letters returned by the feds. I was never informed of these attempts and was left to worry all of those years. Once I got to the Texas system, they intercepted a letter and referred him to victim's services.

I was called to visitation and informed about his wish to visit me. I had a lot of mixed feelings but definitely wanted to see him again. I had worried for so long, not even knowing if he was still alive. He and I went through their program and bullshit just so we could have a contact visit. The downside is that we both had to sign a contract agreeing not to have any further contact with each other after the contact visit. This was something we were both reluctant to sign, but had to in order to do the program. At least we would finally get to see each other again, one final time.

Aaron and I both went through the program as a counselor/mediator prepared each of us for the visit. Aaron and I both were concerned about

the other's welfare. Both of us had had some bad feelings towards the police/courts etc. because of the pure hell we were put through after my arrest. The program usually takes 12 to 16 months before both parties are ready for the visit. That's because most participants truly are victims of rape, abuse, coercion, etc. Aaron did not feel like he was any sort of victim except by the state officials. The counselor had never worked a case where there was an actual relationship based on love and consent. We finished the program in only six months because there was no anger or hostility between Aaron and me towards each other, just lots of questions.

The prison I was at during all of this really surprised the counselor and me. Our mediator had done this for 39 years and said he had never seen anything like it. The whole man/boy relationship was new ground for him, but he was also shocked by how the prison administrators responded. He told them there was no anger or risk of violence during the visit so the warden basically rolled out the red carpet. My friend and I had the whole day to visit in the visiting room with only the mediator in the same room in case there was any problems. One guard was positioned in another room to monitor us in case anything went wrong during the visit.

Aaron wanted to know about my daily routine and living conditions so the warden assembled a "posse" and commenced an impromptu tour. The tour-group grew to include a lot of rank, including the warden, a captain, a lieutenant, a sergeant and one C.O. For those of you who have ever been incarcerated, imagine what would happen at your institution if you went to your cell, workplace, chow hall, etc. with such an assembly of outsiders and rank. Naturally, tongues were wagging. Aaron was tall, dignified, exceedingly handsome and dressed in a suit. A friend of mine knew what was really happening, but told all of the nosy inmates that Aaron was my lawyer and the mediator was his investigator. That helped to explain the presence of so much rank. My friend told everyone I was trying to get out and these people were helping. After the visit, I played along and told everyone I wouldn't be getting out soon, but that I'm doing what I can to shorten my sentence, which is true. Doing this program looks really good to the parole board. Also, Aaron wrote the parole board a letter. He told them he never wanted to see me incarcerated, has no opposition to my release, and that my incarceration is a huge miscarriage of justice and a waste of tax dollars.

Aaron was really upset with my living conditions and lack of privacy. Texas prisons do have a horrible but deserved reputation. Most of our day was spent recounting what each of us went through since my arrest. Our families and the legal system put both of us through pure hell.

Aaron finished school and joined the Air Force. After his service he went to a very reputable college and even played basketball for them. Aaron is now a very successful professional and has also become a state politician to try and make some changes while keeping our past secret.

The visit was a very emotional day for both of us, but we basically got caught up, said our apologies, then recounted good times together. Most importantly, we were finally able to say "goodbye" to each other. It seems like both of us were holding back because of how we had been separated. He was holding back from moving on to other relationships. He needed to hear me say that it was okay to love someone else without feeling guilty about me. I needed him to tell me he understood how much I loved him, and that he realized I had not meant for any harm to come from what we did. He let me know that he was not angry or bitter with me, but rather, with the police, courts, media and everyone else who didn't understand or accept what we had together. The visit ended with a long intimate hug and many tears, as we each knew we might never see each other again.

Strawberries and Footprints

Introduction

My wife, Boo, and I wrote to each other every day while I was incarcerated. This gave me a huge advantage over almost all the others there, many of whom never received letters. This correspondence was like the old time diver's suit that had an air hose going up to the surface. I feel I would have suffocated in the poisonous atmosphere of the prison without it.

In typing up these letters I stayed as close to what was actually written as possible. I corrected our letters for spelling. I also corrected an occasional word where there was another one that was clearly intended. Occasionally I omitted short sections or words that simply intruded upon the flow of a thought without adding anything. Most often I have not included whole letters but only the section of any given letter that was relevant to something we were discussing. In general, however, within the sections I selected, I did not correct the rambling nature of some of our sentences and paragraphs. Also, I corrected the idiosyncratic patterns of punctuation that either of us used only when it was necessary for clarity. These were informal letters – not formal essays.

*When either of us used an * for a footnote, the footnote is included at the end of the paragraph. In the letters it would have been at the bottom of the page, or at times it might have been wrapped around the side of the page. Occasionally I include a note of explanation in brackets. I have no way of including the smiley faces or the little visual aids that Boo included in her letters.*

It was difficult to decide what to select for this sampling of the correspondence between Boo and me. We wrote every day. Some of the letters were brief, but others were fairly long. I obviously could select only a very small amount of the material that was available. In general, I looked for conversations between us on topics that I felt might be interesting or amusing to other people. Occasionally I left in material that was not connected with the topic we were discussing if I felt it showed something about how it was for us during the time I was incarcerated. Therefore the topic subheads under the letters section are only rough indications of the selections they subsume.

Finally in relation to some of our discussions I have included comments and observations that one or the other of us made after I was no longer

incarcerated and we were looking back over our correspondence. These are included to included at the end of each topic, and labeled “in retrospect” with an indication regarding which of us made the observation.

Moon Palce

3/20/01

Dear Boo,

... Interesting things in “Moon Palace.” [A book I was reading]. Here's the scene. An artist went out west at more or less the turn of the century (a little later actually) and encounters a number of misfortunes and finds himself lost in a cave. The cave is the temporarily abandoned hideout of some thieves, so that he has about a years supply of food and his paint. (All very implausible but somehow that's all right in this novel – this is a subplot, by the way.) For various reasons he doesn't expect any work done here to be ever seen by anyone else. He becomes totally free of anyone else's opinions – and finds this very liberating. “For the first time in his life, he stopped worrying about results, and as a consequence the terms “success” and “failure” had suddenly lost their meaning for him. The true purpose of art was not to create beautiful objects, he discovered. It was a method of understanding, a way of penetrating the world and finding one's place in it, and whatever aesthetic qualities and individual canvas might have was almost an incidental byproduct of the effort to engage oneself in this struggle, to enter into the thick of things.”

That's close to what I think. It's like going on a trip to somewhere no one has ever been before. (Travel to new places is also a theme in the novel.) The primary purpose is discovery. I think however that it is important to try to show others what you have discovered....

3/21/01

Dear Jack,

Actually tomorrow – March 22 – is the anniversary. I have no doubt about that because that date is burned into my brain forever – was before it happened and certainly was for sure afterwards. I can remember, it seems like, every detail of that day and the days before it and after it, as if it was right now. Yesterday – the day you thought was the anniversary and was more similar in weather – beautiful bright stark Sun and old snow – to the

2000 court date than tomorrow's probably will be. (Promises rain and snow.)

Last night – aware that today is court day-eve, I dreamed that you went up out of sight into the clouds that night – not necessarily to heaven but up and up into the clouds beyond reach and I went with you as far as I could and then when you kept going and I couldn't go anymore, I started parachuting down. It was dark and I couldn't see the ground very well – I could see trees. I know I was picking the place I was going to live for some time because wherever I landed, that would be it. So the best I could see, I aimed for a populated area – saw houses and trees and went for them. I ended up in the backyard of what sort of was, in the dream, the house here in Lincoln, only it was full of kids (going in and out the way kids do in a vacant house) and the driveway was full of lots of old dead cars. I got up and walked around. It was a little town – strange, everybody was strangers. Everybody was “home” and “at home” in their lives and houses and I didn't belong there or anywhere. I took a “wrong” turn and ended up in somebody's very neat... downstairs area (inside their house somehow). They had some frozen strawberries thawing in the sink and I ate them (like a wild animal would – foraging) then I went upstairs and the lady was in her living room. I realized they had been her strawberries and she was probably saving them to eat herself (and she would go downstairs and miss them) so I paid her \$2.00 without a word and went on out the door and wandered the streets of some more, like a ghost – no place to land really no home anywhere among all these hom-ed people. I wondered how long it would be before they recognized me as a foreigner and a malignancy and went after me.

... The thing I have been having the hardest time with lately is getting my mind and soul around the idea of this house as a place where you are never coming back to – not because you can't but because you won't want to. [I'm not sure where Boo got the idea that I didn't want to come back. I was unsure whether Probation would *allow* me to come back and live in the house because of its closeness to the junior high school, and I'd been fantasizing a lot about buying a trailer to live in, or building a place in the woods that I could retreat to.] Always before one thing that made it easier to live here was the notion of your temporary absence and I was preserving this and that area until you came back. The idea you will not come back makes it more of a ghost house. But it is also easy for me to see why you wouldn't want to come back here and especially why you would just want to establish your own place with your own stuff in it, and silence and your own rules – including your own guest rules and so on. I

guess if you were on probation you could come here to visit if you wanted to – and... I could come see you at your place, if I wouldn't pick my nose. It is of course at this point very hard, impossible to tell how life will really turn out to be a whole year away from now and especially a year and a half from that. So we'll just see. I do understand why you wouldn't want to come back here. I think that people wouldn't be unfriendly – and some – many – would be friendly. But Lincoln itself and the house in many ways is a sort of old wine skin to you – and a desert.

... So I guess we'll just see what happens. What I want most is for you to do what you believe will make you the most happy, whatever that is – and to be where you think will best achieve that's got to be the starting point. Then we can see how to work the pieces around it.

As you have said many times, the prison system is not just at Amherst (or any of the “facilities”) ... it's everywhere really. At this point almost everybody is involved in that one way or another and for everybody in a facility, there is a little circle of family members all affected in similar ways emotionally and practically.

3/22/01

Dear Jack,

Got your letter about the artist in Moon Palace and what he discovered in the cave – and of course, it is exactly right. The process – whatever it is – is what “art” is – the product is like the footprints – the snail trail of the process, but is useful (if it has been a valid process: i.e. Something that searches out and tries to interpret “God” or something beyond us) to other people even in itself, because if the process has been successful at all, that product will contain elements of what-is-beyond-us, and can lead the person who comes in contact with it in that direction – can show him or her some perspective that is from “somewhere else,” even if she or he did not participate in the process of its appearance in the world. Two examples I think of are *The Messiah* (can you imagine what it must have been to write that? To be the first one to hear it as a possibility, to work out what it is? It must have been like standing right beside the burning bush) and... Wyeth. When you look at his things, you can see how he saw any song with eyes beyond our eyes and because he could paint so well, he could show us this – the divine nature of light – everywhere – as it deifies ordinary objects. It does this all the time – every second. But to see it thoroughly takes a certain kind of stillness and silence. Yet you get a sense of it when you are a dying cat, or possibly a dying person, or even if

you just have the flu. Anything that is enough to temporarily stop the noise the forces of life. And if you can paint or write music – or as in your case, write stories or poetry, you can bring that down into ordinary life – sort of as aggressive silence penetrating the noise – where usually it is the other way around....

3/4/01

Dear Betsy,

... Found your comments about art interesting. Your metaphor about the products being like footprints that are a byproduct of the journey was good. The journey is everything. Some people leave behind more useful footprints than others. But the point is not to see who can make the most interesting footprints.

But back to the main point. For me dreams often say things better than we know how. My being lifted up out of the situation to a place where you couldn't follow, and your sense of homelessness and forlornness in the place you parachuted back into are vivid and clear images. The exact meaning of the strawberries isn't quite clear – though it would appear to have to do with your need to get sustenance in a situation where you are homeless. Do you give the church \$2.00 a week, by any chance? Just a guess.

The opposite image is Mr. Dog who owns himself. [The reference is to a children's story by that name. Mr. Dog is not owned by any person but by himself.] This represents something we both want, just as the desolate scene of homelessness is something we both want to avoid. I think you may still sometimes fall into the fallacy of thinking that human warmth and closeness mean the end of Mr. Dog. In fact that's the main task of these next years – to engineer a succession of situations in which neither of us is either left alone or swallowed up.... we can figure out how two Mr. Dogs can live together in relative harmony....

When I come home it won't be as though all this prison stuff didn't happen. For better or worse we have both been through some hard and crazy times. It has to be different. In some ways it should be different. But I am coming home. You are my soulmate. Living with you is home.

Jack

3/28/01

Dear Jack,

Your letter came today about the dream... and about art and the “footprints.”... “the point is not to see who can make the most interesting footprints.” I like that... but people get confused. Just as in music, the point... is not to show off what you can do, but to enable the people to go on a little journey with you outside their jarring and confusing outer and inner situations, toward a place where God is, waits for them always – just to visit that place and be reminded it is there, even though they have to go back. All art is an effort to bring more life down here to this little vale of tears even just for a little bit. That's where you get “Camelot” effect: after the play, after the music, life closes back over us again, but we remember.

... A good clear dream will often say things better than we know how and show us things right from – wherever it is they come from. It's where we perceive that most directly (rightly or wrongly). I think when we are first here on earth we perceive almost entirely in the way of dreams. Then we learn a more cognitive or language-based way – and in some cultures we are taught to respect only this latter way – and learned not to pay attention to the former....

Of course the dream (on or near the anniversary night) was about the court day where you were “lifted” out of the situation and I followed to the point where I couldn't follow any more -- to the little room outside the courtyard until the man came and said “you'll have to leave now Mam” and turned you around and made you put your hands on the wall (as seen on TV) and I parachuted out of the courtroom to the parking lot and drove home. I'll never forget that drive. And Lincoln, when I got back, was like a strange town – it was familiar, but like somebody else's town. On the other hand it was full of ghosts – places we had been the day before when we went around the block – all the structures were there, but you were gone and I knew you were being chewed alive by wolves and there was nothing I could do. The rest of the day is a blur. I remember ordinary noises around, cars, dogs, people talking – and this incredible horrible ominous silence. I never heard so much silence in my life. And at sunset there was a huge deep purple cloud with orange fire underneath it and I stood in the dining room with my foot on the table looking out the window at it watching the darkness close in talking to Everett on the phone.... [Everett was a friend who called to offer his support.]

Anyway, the dream was telling about all that, of course. Well, it was funny: you were talking about it, saying it was “clear” and all, then said “the exact meaning of the strawberries isn't quite clear” -- said it had to do with “a need to get sustenance in a situation where you are homeless.”

Then said (to me, out of the blue) “do you give the church \$2.00 a week by any chance?” And I was reading along and I thought “why does he want to know that? Did he tell me to give that?” (No, I just decided it myself.) “Does he want to make sure I'm giving the Church something at least – to pay my way?” “How would he know what I give them?”

I went on like that in my mind for – I don't know – a minute – thinking “what? Yes. I do, but why is he asking that?” duh) Then of course I thought “Oh, duh.”

Well. Yes. \$2.00 and is what I put in my little envelope once a week. Religiously (so to speak) exactly. That's pretty cool. You get points for that one, smart ass. Where the strawberries come in (or “why strawberries?”) I donno, but the day before or the day of the dream... at the food cupboard we thawed huge baskets of... strawberries at the sink so we could break them up and put them in little containers to refreeze and give them out to the people. The girl I did that with... was a girl in the dream who owned the house... that I ended up in and whose strawberries I ate – like a raccoon – and whom I paid... when I realized that they were hers and she would miss them. [Betsy describes her as “very proper” and at home in her place in the world.]

That's impressive... No, I didn't connect the \$2.00 to being the same \$2.00 that I give to the church...

Strawberries also, by the way, are things I think of as both social and “too expensive or elaborate” to buy unless I'm buying them for somebody else – namely you or Tania, even if they are temporarily cheaper or “on sale.”... So they are totally associated with social life and something that only “other people” have a right to eat. Hence the only way I could or would eat a strawberry – as in the dream – could be to steal one (or some) on the sly.

That's dreams for you – each little detail – if you can manage to remember the dream at all, often has layers like that. You can peel a dream apart by its details and see even more than what it initially presented to you. But this was a dream about the court day – and the subsequent time in Lincoln – and my return to the choir and the church situation.

... I appreciate all you say about my falling into the “fallacy of thinking that human warmth and closeness mean the end of Mr. Doghood.” You are right of course – whether it is a fallacy or not – and I would like to hope it is – I have not succeeded very well... in putting those two things together either in my mind or in my life as I live it. All you say about how we might try to compromise somehow, after the next 2 ½ years, to put

something together – something that might work for both of us – sounds very hopeful. “That two Mr. Dogs can live together in relative harmony” -- that sounds almost like heaven....

3/28/01

Dear Boo,

[Who had just written that a Liberal minister who believed in “restorative justice” wanted to visit me.]

The “restorative justice” thing, as I understand it, still operates out of the same basic model – these are bad people in a good society. But rather than punish them we need to help them become good so they will fit in with the rest of us good people. Well that's headway. But I almost think I prefer just being punished. Until society can enter into dialogue with prisoners I'm not much interested in any of their “treatment” or “therapy” programs....

Really, who I am is just too scary to people. I am too far outside the mainstream in too many ways. I don't want to be accepted back – not at the cost of selling my soul. I would rather be left alone – to be able to find a niche where I can survive and talk to the few people I can talk to, and read and write. But almost everybody except you is scared off even if I begin to say what I think. So for the moment it is probably better that I don't , at least in most situations.

Even with people with similar charges I find that what I can do is VERY limited. People, above all, want to be accepted back into the mainstream. They do not want to hear that the mainstream is not a good place and that they cannot return. They will be expected to shit on their deepest longings and most tender feelings – and even then they won't really be accepted back – ever. The only hope for outsiders is to network with other outsiders – but in order to do this they must first have to admit that they are outsiders....

Love,

Jack

3/30/05

Dear boo,

... “Well, a-hem. I suppose (if I say so myself) that I deserve a few points for guessing that the \$2.00 in your dream referred to your weekly church offering. I impressed myself with that one. God knows, I try to be modest, but sometimes it's hard.

Loved what you said about art. It's an “effort to bring down more light.”

You deserve strawberries too. Everybody wants and deserves strawberries. Once again you are a universalist at heart, but you can't allow yourself in heaven....

[I drew to hear a little diagram of a rectangular box was lots of dots in it, and with one set off from the others with a circle drawn around it. I labeled the box “All and Everything,” all the many dots in the rectangle is “Everybody else (eating strawberries),” the circle as “hell” and the one dot inside the circle as “me.” As this was meant to be a diagram of her theology, the “me” referred to her.]

This is a visual aid that illustrates your basic theology of where God plans to (and should) put everybody. Study it and see whether you can discern anything illogical in the view of things illustrated here....

Love Jack

3/31/01

Dear Jack,

... The \$2.00 thing was impressive. You have a right to suspend your (usual herculean) effort to be modest over that one. Everybody deserves a vacation sometimes – and I know in this area, you are chronically over extended.

I love the little diagram (visual aid) of All and Everything, Heaven and Hell and everybody else (eating strawberries), and me. I studied it: it looks about right. Very nice illustration: I think God would like it.

Love,

Boo

4/2/01

[This letter to Boo opened not with the salutation but with a prayer – which was a response to her comment about my “herculean effort's.”]

Dear silent, meditative, poetic, That-Which-Sustains–Our-Very-Being and is the Eternal Pool we dip into that Grounds (or waters) our existence in the world and weaves Itself Mysteriously and Subtly – ever changingly into the fabric of our lives – please don't grind me (or water me either) and also please don't let Boo have any strawberries until she can be nice and not say sarcastic things....

Love,

Jack

[the next letter was in general a response to some things I had said about “treatment” and more specifically a response to a note Dan Levesque wrote that expressed some feelings he had in relationship to the treatment group he attended. Unfortunately, I don't seem to be able to find a copy of his note. In any case it described feelings of being worn away by all the forces arrayed against him, and mentioned his anxiety about having dreams that were not acceptable.]

4/4/01

Dear Jack,

Dan's little note “to whomever” is (obviously) very sad and also very vivid and lucid – especially the image about the rock and the way the water wears it down. His talk about “unguarded thoughts” invading his dreams (my God, can't you even dream whatever you dream?) making sleep “dangerous,” is especially disturbing – and makes me wonder if he is in the “therapy” group there. The paper was written on Feb. 23. I do hope that his state of mind has changed some since then – even if his outer circumstances have not. He desperately needs to grasp and believe with his whole heart and no matter what happens “in the world” that nobody – no human on the face of the earth – has the right – or the ability – no matter what they may believe – no matter what brainwashing tactics they use – no matter what humiliating techniques they use – to “paint his portrait.” He has the God-given right to decide for himself who he is, what he is like, and to maintain that in his heart no matter what kind of shit the world throws at him (for its own reasons) as far as determining his identity for him and interpreting it to him. All of what the world – especially the psychotic world at Charleston – tells him about who he is, what he is like, and what he is worth is false – totally false. Also his thoughts, his fantasies, his hopes, his (at night) dreams – are his – nobody

else's. They belong to him and are nobody's business, NOBODY'S – but his and God's – because God is aware of everything anyway including the antics of the pond punks, and the administrative -punks efforts to break into people's souls (rape them) and drive all the light out of them and bend them to their will.

Dan can't at this point, change his external situation, but he can make every effort within his strength to stand up to these people, in his heart, to affirm himself – as he is, however he is – in spite of their systematic efforts to wear him down – it leads to himself. It does neither him nor anybody else he may come into contact with or try to love – or receive love from any good to acquiesce to them in any way.

... All you say about the “mental health” workers (state enforcers of Right-wish, Right-dream, Right-fantasy, Right-think, Right-act) is true of course....

It has to be almost impossible for an individual by himself to resist that kind of highly competent, well thought out and technically enhanced, uncompromising and unrelenting attack on his soul, when everything that would seem hopeful, or have (God forbid) “Eros” for him.... even your father (the rock) in the “sensitivity” group said “well if you all hate me, I'll just go home to my wife and my dog.” He didn't have “just himself.” He had somebody. That's why what you are trying to do (establish networking) is so important – to you and all the other victims like that....

It is possible that the more effort you make to preserve your life (what there is of it) there, and your soul – and so, the souls of others, the more you will find yourself under special scrutiny and attack by the powers....

[Many years ago, after we had been married only a few years, Boo had been hospitalized in a private “institute” for a mental/emotional breakdown. One day Dr. Hewin, the head psychiatrist at the place told her she suffered from a disease called “schizophrenia” and that she would have to be on medication the rest of her life. After she was released she was soon off the medications that he insisted she would need, and she was able to take charge of her own soul again. The memories that she describes in this next section of this letter pertains to the time just before she was released.]

What you said in your letter regarding Total Institutions – prisons and mental hospitals – and their attack on the whole person (everything you think, feel, dream, or perceive is open to question)... – sent me hurtling back to M Street. And I remembered something I haven't thought about in years – never forgot it – just haven't brought it up on my screen. There

was a time when I was close to getting out and we went down to somewhere where there was a wire mesh fence – and some water and rocks – and talked about stuff – among it, Hewin's assessment that I was hopelessly schizophrenic and would always require meds (or state medical sanction) to be an acceptable person in the world. Without this, M Street type experience would inevitably become our lives. What I remember about that most was you're talking to me as if I were a person – a person capable of making decisions that would be just ordinary responsible decisions – and your seeming to have no question about that – that, in spite of what Hewin and all the expert scientific community thought and had expressed, I was a person – an ordinary person with an ordinary soul, ordinary ego, ordinary will etc. – the same one you married three years before – not a hopelessly flawed, potential basket case.

I remember very much my astonishment (as if I were shaken awake) that you thought that – and were indeed talking to that person. And decided if you thought she existed, whether you were saying or not (which was somewhat open to question at M. Street) I loved you – and decided to opt for the possibility that you were right and to try my very best to ... make what you seem to believe was true (that I was a person and the same as before), actual. This entailed, more than anything, believing it myself – and to do that I felt almost entirely dependent, at that point in time, on your believing it. So little by little by that mutual belief, contrary to what we were told was reality, we pulled out of that. (Got into other troubles etc. etc., but not that one again.)

I mentioned that because of what you talk about regarding the powerful onslaught on the souls – in any of these places. It's hard to convey, but you're talking to me as if I saw “reality” just as you did, without question, enabled me to have the courage to stand up, in my heart, to the psychiatric powers. The fact that I was “astonished” that you thought I was real makes me realize the extent to which has had “lost,” without realizing it, swallowed, a good deal of their poisoned apple sauce.

“Meds,” by the way (which were served to some people with applesauce) helps the poison (poisonous news of reality and of themselves) go down. When a person is zonked on Thorazine – as many people there were – he/she questions nothing.

It is still a blessing that compulsory drugs are not a part of the prison system. I suspect that the main, possibly the only, reason for this may be economics and the taxpayers would “outcry” is prison expenses increased to the point they would if drugs were introduced.

Seeing the Fox

[To understand the significance of what Boo is describing here, a person would need to know several facts. First, Boo was on her way to pick up our daughter who was returning to the US from a trip abroad. Second, Boo did not like to drive in strange places and did not have a great deal of confidence in her ability to find her way around. She frequently had dreams about being lost in a big and confusing city. Third, Boo and I both paid some attention to “synchronicities” which we interpreted in much the same way a person would interpret dreams. Perhaps the best way of explaining this is to say we both have a sense that the world can be read both literally and symbolically. I would say that the world is itself a kind of narrative that can be read “meaningfully” as well as the way in which science reads it. I am acutely aware that this puts us seriously out of step with the intellectual culture that is currently dominant, and that we risk being labeled “schizophrenic” because of this. Finally, in order to understand how Boo experienced this incident, it would be necessary to understand that the fox is an animal for which I feel a certain affinity. I feel about it as Native Americans may have felt about their “totem” animals.]

4/17/05

Dear Jack,

... What I wanted to tell you last night is this – I started down to Madison (in the dark) Sunday night. It is very very creepy. It's very dark – and you can't see anything except what is right in front of the car and car outlines of trees (you know they are trees but you can't see them). Then cars come up behind you and shine their lights in the mirror for ever and until they decide you aren't going to go faster, then they go around you and its dark until the next one comes up and does the same thing. (There was a surprising lot of traffic – I guess because of its being Easter.) You can't see any signs until you are right on top of them. I had the music on which helps a lot because that helps you feel that “God is with you” instead of its being just an abstraction. Then I got down near Patterson and the sky changed from being pitchdark to being sort of very dark pink (lit up) right above the ground and I knew that was a sign of Madison being down the road. It (Madison light) was reflecting in the clouds. So that was hopeful. Then I got a sign that said “Madison next five exits” and I was glad it said that.... then all of a sudden there was just pitchdark and thousands of

orange striped garbage cans -- rows and rows of them. I had no idea what I did (the music was off), or where I was going, or even if I was on a road. I just made my way through the garbage cans. I didn't know... how to find the airport from there. But I just kept going and trying to see something that might make sense. That went on a while and then I saw a sign that said Park Avenue. [A street she was familiar with]. I tell you I was glad to see that sign. I cried to see that sign because I had a pretty good idea that garbage cans weren't going to get in the way of the airport if I just kept going on through them. It was very dark except for the garbage cans stripes. I saw the sign and slowed way down – made people mad all around, I guess, because they started whizzing around. But I didn't know how I was going to tell how to get off the road, and I damn well wasn't going to pass it. I found it, got off, and started inching down the road where I thought the airport was. It was all dark and bright lights, but you couldn't tell what anything was or what it would be in the daytime. But I knew I was close. I almost turned in... too early because the turn looked sort of “airporty,” but decided (probably with help) that anything as big as Madison Airport would be better marked than that at night because there would be other people also trying to find it if they didn't know where was. So, sure enough, there it was – Nice Big Sign: Madison Airport, and there was a light there that you could stop at – malls and McDonald's type stuff all around. So I stopped. I could tell how to make it from there.

Now you got the scene: Dark – highways – malls – concrete – lights and neon lights – and cars all around, etc. etc. When I stop, right in front of the car a beautiful little red fox came off the side of the road from the left, and crossed through the headlights over to the parking lot from the right. It had something in its mouth (a prey of some sort, it looked like). I couldn't believe what I was seeing and I checked to make sure it was a fox. It was a little-ish one, but grown. Head pointy ears and a very bushy tail. I tell you this so you will know it was one. It was not a dog. It was a fox. I turned and drove in just crying (again). Jesus Christ, Jesus H. F... (I said the word) Christ – over and over and over. I couldn't understand it. How do you “understand” those things, but I had to think it must be what it seemed to be – which is something I can't say in language....

Love,

Boo

Those who shit in the woods

5/12/01

Dear Boo,

... I had a funny thought this morning. Everybody presents to the world an image of what they want others to think of them. This is obviously nothing new. But this may not be just one fact among others, but may be the most important fact of our social interaction. Since this means we are not real to each other we are naturally very lonely. Picasso pictured this vividly in his painting of people interacting with each other as they held little Lolly Pop shaped masks in front of their faces.

[I included an (admittedly somewhat crude) picture showing two people facing each other, each holding a smiley face mask in front of them. The note to this picture said "Visual aid – very much like Picasso's paintings – worth lots of money.]

There are, so far as I am able to tell, not people who do this and people who don't – there are only people who know they do this and people who don't seem to know that.

Now if somebody has this mask ripped away suddenly it is terribly embarrassing to everybody. It is though you were caught shitting in the woods.

If you are caught shitting in the woods there are clear expectations as to how you are to behave. First you are to apologize for shitting in the woods. You say "Oh, I am deeply sorry for being who I am," for being a woods shitter has suddenly become your essence. Of course it is generally understood that people do shit from time to time, but to shit in the woods is unthinkable. Really, one should not allude to the fact that people even shit at all. You would not, for example, say, "So what's it to you? I'll bet you shit sometimes too." And of course you would never add, "I'll bet you even shit in the woods, or at least have done that at some point in your life."

The next thing that is expected is that you mend your ways. If you grovel enough and go through enough contrition rituals you may eventually be allowed to appear in public with a (marginally) acceptable mask again. Did I mention to you that people who are caught shitting in the woods have their masks taken away? The new mask is the "mask of the one who used to shit in the woods and is deeply ashamed of that fact and would never do it again and who because of years of therapy never even feels the

impulse to ship in the woods anymore.” It is important to get this right so you can order the correct mask at the mask store.

All this is still not my new insight. This was already known. My new thought pertains to what happens if one doesn't follow the prescribed remedy for being caught shitting in the woods. Suppose one simply says, “big deal. Everybody shits in the woods one way or another. Now if I shit on your foot by accident, or even if I shit on a path that you frequently use, I do apologize. But if this is simply for shitting discreetly behind this little bush, well live with it. People do.”

Now here comes my new insight. When people react this way a very strange thing happens. First, they may be very ashamed of having Shat in the woods. Or may have Shat in some other place and be thinking “well, at least I didn't shit where he did.” Nevertheless they are drawn to the person. They are drawn to the very quality in the unrepentant person that they most fear – his audacity – his refusal to throw himself fully into the socially prescribed script. The refusal need not be blatant. Perhaps it is only a matter that some line was not said with sufficient conviction, or a tear did not flow when it was supposed to, or that it flowed some inappropriate moment. It doesn't take much.

At the moment when two or more who have been caught shitting in the woods meet and honestly talk, a nuclear reaction begins that will eventually destroy the world and clear the way for a new one. Because then more and more woods shitters will find the courage to congregate and they will be joined by people who are only afraid they might (in spite of themselves) shit in the woods, and they in turn will be joined by those who simply would like to shit in the woods (which one way or another includes just about everybody in the world), so finally they will all throw down their masks and just be what they are both to themselves and to each other.

Naturally we will need some order in this new world to come and to fill that need I plan to start a new church. It will be the Holy and Immaculate Church of All Those Saints and Angels Who Shit in the Woods (Including Even Those Who Only Would If They Could.” It is open to anyone who is what he or she is or even wishes for this...

5/17/01

Dear Jack,

Who would have thought that a holy (no pun intended) new and profound world changing religious movement (no pun intended) would be born

from the divine vision of one humble ordinary individual sitting at a crude picnic table in a small primitive minimal security prison writing on ordinary lined notebook paper with an ordinary Bic pen – an ordinary meek and (usually) quiet man with failing teeth and arthritis who sat down to chat with his equally ordinary wife and suddenly a vision came to his humble inner eyes: a vivid memory of a great Picasso painting which he was instantly miraculously (religious leaders later agreed) able to replicate on the same humble notebook paper using only his ordinary Bic pen? This miraculous replication has since sold for even more millions than the original Picasso because of its religious implications and the unanimous acknowledgment among world religious leaders that it is indeed the product of a visitation from Some Divine Presence or Other, as was the initial vision that lead (in that lonely and humble moment in that lowly place where the lowest of the low and the poorest in spirit were caged) to the conception of what later became the Great Holy and Immaculate (well sort of) (after wiping with leaves) Church of All Of those Saints and Angels Who Shit in the Woods Including Even Those Who Only Would If They Could – drawing millions of Woods Shitters from behind their bushes into its loving all embracing arms and creating (because the Woods Shitters account for just about everybody in the whole world) Global World Peace – because there-after, no Woods Shitter even felt like bombing or maiming or being anything other than friendly to a brother (or sister) Woods Shitter – no matter what color or nationality, etc. Woods Shitters also just felt like sharing the worlds resources with one another and with the animals (fellow Woods shitters)....

... Do I want to join the Holy and Immaculate Church of those Who Shit in the woods? Well – it sort of depends on what you do for Communion. At my church they will serve free body and blood. I'd have to know what exactly yawl serve. If it's just symbolic – like maybe little sausages – I might could do it...

Love,

Boo

5/17/01

Darr Boo,

... Yes, you can join the Holy and Immaculate Church of Those Who Shit in the Woods. (For the sake of saving ink I don't use the full name. That is used for ceremonial purposes.) We do as you suggest, preserve the sacrament of communion – but with some modifications. We will serve link sausage (as you suggested) and wine. The sausage symbolizes

something ineffable (or at least I choose not to eff it.) The fact that it is link sausage symbolizes the unity of humanity (see, we are linked one with the other – subtle, huh?). The wine doesn't symbolize anything. I just thought it would go well with the sausage. I'm thinking maybe a little Chianiti. ...

Love,

Jack

5/22/01

Dear Jack,

Ralph [*one of the older men who used the food cupboard where Boo worked*] was outside when it opened. The lady who came in right after him came over to me and whispered, “There is poop on the stairs.” So Jane (fellow worker) went and cleaned it up.... Jane speculated a dog might have got in. I was forthright with my theory [*that Ralph had done it*] – then felt bad about it because everybody else was falling all over themselves to say they “had no idea how it got there – must've been some kid etc..” So I agreed with them – after I had shown my cards (said what I thought) (too late) – I said “well we'll never know who it is unless we do a DNA test on it.” This brought raucous laughter which told me everybody was nervous about it. They are all (in this group) seniors – 85, 70, 72, -- so it was a little close to home for them. They didn't want to think Ralph did it. I was a little slow on that. Maybe it was a dog. (It was a careless conclusion, and I did feel bad – should have kept it to myself.)...

5/29/01

Dear Jack,

Oh my Gawd, I totally missed what Ralph was doing. He was witnessing! He was coming out of the closet and declaring himself to me (to you), to anyone who cared to know, that he is indeed at least a wannabe member of the Holy and Immaculate Church of those Who Shit the Woods-- definitely “one of us.” I'm sure also that, as you say, he would have made it to the woods had he been able to – maybe. Whether he would have or not, I don't see why, if we expand our theology even a tiny bit we can't easily find room in our church for those who shit on the stairs in public places. We should pride ourselves on welcoming diversity

Viewed in retrospect (hindsight – so to speak) it was really an artful shit and stands on its own merit – superior in its placement in time and space

to any woods shit – given the same circumstances. If Ralph had made it to the woods, the shit would not have had anything like the power it did in the position where he in fact placed it – would have been lost to posterity (so to speak), so you have to hand it to him. His ingenuity like that, and ability to think for himself and see unique opportunity where others might miss it, he should become a valuable member of our church.

It was indeed an artful, well-placed shit – a beautiful medium sized turd deposited neatly about midway between the Food Cupboard (downstairs) and the Christian School of Pine River upstairs.

Re: The Food Cupboard, the Health Department does not even allowed ducks to shit in the parking lot within 50 feet of the building (or any building which houses, or distributes food for human consumption). The... building has no shit detector – no way to determine whether anyone is entering the building in a state of emergency – ie., in possession of something about to emerge. Ralph made it easily past the door and dropped his package right in the heart of the building. Nice.

Upstairs – immediately left as you leave the stairwell – first door – is the Christian School of Pine River – a chilling place – kids about 8, 9, 10 years old. It was on these innocents that Rachel, Jane and Cindy [*coworkers in the Food Cupboard*] wanted to pin responsibility for the turd. They didn't take into account that these are not babies or even toddlers. Plus, more to the point, these are all Christian School kids. They never shit at all. They have no bottoms – that is, no middle. They have heads, upper torsos, arms and hands, legs and feet. That's all. They don't even see themselves as challenged in any way, and their teachers don't either. So this thing on the stairs – it must have been an education for them. The teachers must have had to explain to them A, what a turd is, and B where they come from – or she may have sent them home to ask their parents – who may have been similarly challenged so they may not have known, depending on whether they were challenged from birth (raised Christian from an early age)....

Love,

Boo

5/31/01

Dear Boo,

You raise deep theological questions. I can see that someone who shits on the stairs should be accepted if, in fact, he would have Shat in the woods had he been able to. Yes, we believe in diversity. There are many different

kinds of woods one can shit in. But stairs? As an acceptable alternative? That seems like more than just a little change.

But yes, as you suggest, hindsight is more important than foresight when it comes to shitting in the woods. It does seem that Ralph was witnessing. He was making a political statement. What does concern me is that his act may be found to be less than politically correct. One could see it as flaunting his abilities in front of the scatologically challenged people in the Bible study group at the top of the stairs. One should not ridicule those people for their disabilities....

Love,

Jack

Do you believe in D...O...G...?

(Also reflections on other items of theological importance.)

[Our daughter Tania learned to read at about the same time she learned to talk, and in much the same way. We read to her a lot, and she spontaneously took an interest in the written words – much as a child takes an interest in spoken words – and essentially she taught herself to read. It just evolved naturally along with spoken language. At first when she “read” one of her Dr. Seuss books – one that she had insisted that we read to her over and over – we were not sure whether she was reading or whether she had simply memorized the book. It may have been a bit of both. At any rate, as she grew up, all of her language skills developed in a somewhat precocious manner. Because of this, Boo and I found it difficult to have any private communication when Tanya was with us – which is pretty much all the time. So we were in the habit of spelling words out to each other when we wanted to say something to each other that she would not be able to follow.

When she was little we hitched her into her child's car seat in the back seat when we took her anyplace in the car. One day, when she was between two and three, we were on our way to somewhere. There had been a pause in the conversation. Then we heard her ask from the back seat, “Dad. Do you believe in D O G?” it was totally out of the blue, and it took us a minute to digest what we had heard. Boo, always tactful and discreet, tried to respond in a respectful manner, but I could not contain myself and burst out laughing. Tanya felt put down, I am afraid, and was quite annoyed with me. Boo gave me a dirty look and I tried to get myself under control.]

6/1/01

Dear Jack,

... speaking of words for things, you said “I can leave it to” (not wanting to say “God” because of all the weight of confused and confusing and contradictory and ambiguous associations that weigh that word down now after centuries of people handling it and getting their fingerprints and armpits smell – respective religious armpit smells all over it, said) “whatever-it-is-that-runs-this-show,” which is accurate – but is long – and if you have to say that every time you mean it – well you will wear your head out. So I thought I'd tell you my secret. It is really true but I have never told anybody before – not even you, but I'll tell you because you are, of all people, the only one who would understand (without a lot of explanation) – well no, you and Tanya would.... I run into the same problem. I really can't use the word “God” much anymore except as a swear word or a casual word but I haven't (didn't have) another one except long and improvised ones like the one you used. So what I call God secretly, when I refer to It* as “DOG.” For some reason, in my mind, that seems to do the trick. It's easy to remember and I know what I mean. “Eg. I found myself saying that DOG sent the fox to the airport road.” It's like a nickname, however, and is a little too casual, but I've used it, tried it out from time to time, to myself – as an alternative name. It works for me. You're the only other person that knows it now. (I don't call It that to It's face very often – much....

*That's my new improved pronoun – It with e means that It Is Alive and Is God. Can you offer any contrary suggestions? We do need one.

Love,

Boo

6/4/01

Dear Boo,

I love your secret word for the ineffable One. I think you can justly claim that it came to you in a moment of revelation – when Tanya, from the backseat, asked whether we believe in D...O...G. Notice that she spelled that, rather than said the word, intuiting that the holy name can be uttered out loud only on the most sacred occasions.

As for the personal nonsexist pronoun, I think I have an answer to that. We simply combined he, she and it. Begin with he.... then add the “s” from she and you get She (not She). Then you add “it” and you get Sheit.

(Pronounced Shee-yit – sort of like they would pronounce the name of a lowly but honorable substance in N. Carolina.)

love,

Jack

6/26/01

Dear Boo,

... The image of a God who sends some people to a fiery eternal punishment and others to a blissful paradise is only slightly less primitive than the Aztec image of a God who ate the still beating hearts of sacrificial victims. It is only because we grew up with this image that we can't see how absurd it is. It is, in fact, the image of our social order which, also, is only somewhat less primitive than the Aztec's. Ghettos, the environments of street people, prisons, mental hospitals etc. are dimensions of a hell created and justified by our primitive mythology. The judge performs the function of God. ("God" is the collective mind of the dominant majority.) Paradise is the suburbs of the rich and comfortable. Our dominant (and primitive) mythology justifies our social order as surely as the Hindu formulation of reincarnation justifies the caste system. God is no more interested in having anguished souls wasting away in hell than he/she/it is interested in eating the still beating hearts of captives taken in war. We need to awaken from these primitive and nightmarish dreams – but not to a sterile unidimensional materialism. Rather we need to awaken to an awareness of our possibilities for a deeper understanding and a more universal compassion. That's what Jung was all about....

Love,

Jack

[Boo sang in the choir at the local Congregational Church. We had both decided to attend church in spite of the fact that there were a number of things about it that made us uncomfortable – such as the mixing of religion and patriotism. Politically and theologically neither of us felt that much at home, but we liked a lot of the people and wanted to “fit in” or to “belong” in the community. She always had a bit of a problem with Communion for two reasons. First, the basic idea of eating the body and blood of Jesus seemed “creepy” to her. But also the grape juice, being very acid, tended to upset her stomach. Earlier in the week she had told me in a letter that I have misplaced that she had tried to pass the grape

juice on without taking any during the last service. Somebody had noticed and made an issue of it. She told me that next time she was tempted to say "I'll just have some body. I'd rather pass on the blood, thanks." Independently of this she had told me that sometimes she found herself "muttering," by which he meant saying negative things to herself or under her breath when something bothered her about what was happening or being said in the service.]

6/28/01

Dear Boo,

... Re: Muttering, "I'll just have some body. I'd rather pass on the blood, thanks." Now that's muttering!! I would even go so far as to say it's willful muttering. (A class A offense, otherwise known as "aggravated muttering." I can't emphasize how serious this is. Don't think I haven't noticed it before. Did you actually said that, by the way? I'd love to hear what the the reaction was. Probably a blank uncomprehending stare. I'm sure that, had anyone said that to me, I would've cracked up on the spot and ruined the entire service for everybody. It would have been awful....

Love,

Jack

6/13/01

Dear Boo,

... What you say about Tasha when she was 2 ½ is true. God knows that I didn't teach her to spell. (Or, seeing as she spelled God, D O G, maybe I did.) As you (and Wordsworth) say, we come "trailing clouds of glory."...

Love,

Jack

Clint Eastwood

6/24/01

dear boo,

...Earlier today I noticed a row of videos sitting in the window of the "bubble" (the "bubble" as you may recall, is the locked in enclosure where the guards sit.) It occurred to me (rightly as it turned out) that the guards had a plan to show all these movies today one after the other. They are hooked in by the cable to all the TVs in the building. I went to see what

they were. About four of them were Clint Eastwood movies, one or two were John Wayne and the remaining few were movies of a similar genre. “Oh my God,” I thought. “Wall to wall Clint Eastwood from noon to 10 p.m. Tonight. I'll go insane.”

Well, when I went back to my room after lunch, sure enough, Aaron was watching a Clint Eastwood movie. “Oh my God,” I said. “Look at that rugged face. Why I'll bet he can beat anybody up. But he's really pure as the driven snow and good and even sensitive though he's often misunderstood. Look how he's being provoked by that other guy. He'll put up with it as long as he can and then I'll bet he beats him up...”

My roommates were puzzled. Why was I doing this? Aaron was annoyed with me and asked whether I didn't like this movie.

I told him I really hated movies like this – that I was so sick of macho faces and movies about people beating each other up and shooting each other and driving around like maniacs and crashing into each other that I could puke.”

“Really?” he said. I think he really was surprised.

“Really,” I said....

Love,

Jack

6/27/01

Dear Jack,

... Jack – how can I break this to you? You are – maybe – the only person in the “civilized” world who doesn't want the TV on and in his face or at least in his ears 24-7. I've said this before, but I kid you not. As soon as I leave this house I hear at least mechanical music – everywhere. It's in the streets, in stores, in the laundromat (TV), in people's cars (if you go in, then you have to talk and listen over either TV or radio rock-music and advertisements). If you call people on the phone you can hear the TV going. Here in the house there is no TV going usually. I watch it some nights with my hand inches away from the sound control. It won't be on when you get here either. Right now I am hearing the wind in the trees and some rain....

This is why people by and large are not able to think their own thoughts. TV is very much like being mentally – auditorially goose-fed and for most people it seems to be addictive – to the point that they don't know they're addicted. They've grown up with it on all the time and so when it is not on,

and they are awake, they experience this horrible, very unsettling absence. I guess that's the only reason I can see to explain why a person coming into a room and finding the TV off, would flip it on automatically, the way you would turn on a light – and then maybe start talking to someone else in the room – not paying any attention to it – but needing to have it making TV noises in his ears in order to feel alive.

Love,

Boo

Cellies: It's a Matter of Respect

Cellie One

October 14, 2017 – Saturday

My cellie is making me nuttier than rat crap in a pistachio packaging plant. It really causes me to hate myself, because, by prison logic, I should simply punch him. Since I won't punch him, I am basically a "bitch" who he can treat as he chooses. One issue is the fact that he has a TV, but no headphones. I bought a new set of earbuds (\$4.58) and a 12 foot extension (\$3.46) for him and asked that he use them when he watches TV. He explained to me that "I can't wear them while watching football, and they hurt my ears." To solve the pain issue, I gave him my "good ones" (soft, in the ear canal tips). They now hang on a hook, unused. I tried to compromise. I said "when I have my music or TV on, I can drown out your TV but when I try to read, your TV is really a distraction." Sadly I tend to read on weekends and, as you know, football cannot be watched while wearing headphones! So I have become a night owl, reading in the middle of the night, and sleeping all day. Or I tried to, but he complained about my keeping him awake, so he turns on his TV. I just do not have the proper mentality. I cannot out-asshole this asshole!

Yesterday I tried to watch the evening news. I had my earbuds loud enough to drown out his TV, but I also cannot hear him. So. 13 times he banged on my bed so he could ask me "What's that story about?" He is far worse than any eight-year-old child. I know it does no good to get angry. He has no evil or cruel intent, he just cannot comprehend a world in which the sun does not rise and set on his ass. If I could punch him he would understand that, but once I resort to violence, I become what I most hate.

November 12, 2017 Sunday

Memo:

To PSP Sgt.

CC caseworker III

From Inmate xxxxxx

Subject: Plea for help

I am a 47-year-old man serving life for sexual crimes against children. I do not judge others on matters of race, crime, sexual orientation, standards of personal hygiene, mental ability or anything. I only ask for mutual respect. My current cellmate is simply disrespectful. Not violent, threatening, nor destructive, but loud and

inconsiderate. I've tried to discuss this calmly and not resort to fisticuffs. Instead I internalize my rage.

I am courteous to staff, I have only minor disciplinary history and I continually apply for programs and employment, but the path to level one seems blocked. I spend 18 or more hours per day in a cell with a man who seems to take pleasure in contentiousness. I have no chance to return to mental equilibrium. Instead my stress level is rising.

Please speak to me confidentially if you need more information, but a simple bed move could solve this problem. I intend to pursue this up my chain of command if the request is ignored.

Cellie Two

[Due to prison cell re-assignments, Stevenson got a new cellie in mid-April, 2018.]

April 29, 2018 – Sunday

I don't know why the gods of prison life seems so determined to have me live with a young "dropout" from gang life. I'm sure they are no more pleased with the situation they find themselves in: living with a middle-aged pedophile. I think it all comes down to having a different definition of RESPECT. They view it as a need to follow the rules of the alpha male, who is naturally the one who can beat up any of the others. Age, wisdom, life experience, etc. mean nothing if not backed up with physical violence. I asked my cellie if we could have a "compatibility conversation" and he seemed confused. He told me that there would be no problems as long as I did not "disrespect" him. So I said "well if I'm doing anything you can't live with, let me know."

He said "I have no problem 'getting down' (which means a physical beating)."

So I said "I do not fight, and if I am assaulted I will report it. There is no reason for you to go to the hole. If you tell me you want to get me, I'll move out."

He replied, "Just don't disrespect me."

Thus ended our compatibility conversation. He has agreed to wear his headphones only at night, and the cell-light is controllable by him alone. I always use my headphones, either to hear my TV and music if I choose, or to listen to a recording of "rain on a window" when I sleep during the day, when I read or sleep at night, or when he forgets he agreed to wear the headphones at night. He goes home sometime this year. Life with him will be but a temporary inconvenience. He did mention to me yesterday that

his “Homies” warned him at yard that I am a chomo, but that as long as I show him “respect,” I have nothing to worry about. I guess in his opinion, my past crimes are of no concern to him, but he will gladly delay his going home to defend his honor from perceived “disrespect.” So I avoid any conversation. If he asks me a question my reply is “Yes,” “No,” or “I don’t know.” If he offers me anything, I say, “no thank you” and I never ask him for anything. I did make sure to find out his habits as far as cleaning, toilet flushing, sleep, etc. and I go to tier for an hour or two every day.

Gang life in the general population for “South Siders,” the main Mexican gang, has many rules. For example if you are told to stab someone, you must comply. If one South Sider is in a fight, it is the duty of every South Sider to also fight. Many people “drop out” because they fail to obey and so the South Siders want to kill them. They still maintain a “gang mentality” with other “dropouts” in PC, and recruit others to increase their numbers. My cellie seems to be a high-ranking “PC South Sider.” Upon his release from prison, he will return to his neighborhood gang until his next arrest.

May 26, 2018 – Saturday

The more I learn about the “Mexican Mafia” (who are basically the foot soldiers of the cartel) the more I despise them. They fight amongst themselves on the streets, but, once in prison, they form an alliance of Us versus Them in which “Them” are not only the guards, but anyone not in their gang, or anyone who was in the gang but violates the rules. A “dropout” has only given up on the “prison politics,” and many join a gang of dropouts. Now and then a few inmates in good standing will pretend to drop out so that they can come to protective custody to recruit members back into the family or order a hit. Last Saturday’s yard fight was such a hit. I’m pretty sure my cellie is an inmate in good standing who is a pretend dropout. Living peacefully with the likes of me provides a good cover.

Okay, I need to release some internal pressure and described to you just what a self-centered ass my cellie is. He truly believes that respect is a one-way street. It must be given to him at all times, but others get none. It seems to not even occur to him that his actions may affect others. If I’m lucky, he will at least tell me how he likes things done, and I’m so passive that I simply obey, and pray for my next cellie. *[In order to understand what Stevenson describes below, it’s necessary to understand the arrangement of his prison cell. A diagram by Robert is included for this.]*

My cellie likes to cover his shelf with a blue sheet which matches the one he uses to cover the light. The sheets make the cell “look better.” But they

move and slip around. I have to use the lower shelf as a step to get to the top bunk. There are no ladders or hand-holds. He puts his slippers and cup on the floor, creating an obstacle course when I climb down, and, of course, the space under his bed is for his stuff. I store mine at the foot of my bed and sleep with my knees bent. His TV is on 24 hours a day, even if he is out of the cell, and he will only use headphones from midnight until breakfast because he was taught to “show respect by allowing a cellie to sleep.” I’m very careful to never bump his TV when I climb down from my bed.

June 10, 2018. Sunday.

On Friday my situation came to a head. He said “I’ve talked to you about farting when I’m in the room and [about finding] your hair on my shelf. Now you are intentionally disrespecting me. Next time you fart or I find a hair, we’re going to have a serious problem.” So I packed up my stuff while he was at the yard, and when he returned, I moved my property onto the tier, kneeled down with my hands on my head, and I simply refused to go into the cell with him. I was moved to “level III” and I’ll be written up. In level III we spend 156 of 168 hours per week locked in, but my stress level is way down. Also I’m back on my Prozac. For me it really helps.

Cellie Three

June 10, 2018. Sunday (cont.)

My new cellie is another “dropout,” but I think he has honestly given up on gang life. He is 27 years old, but upon meeting me, he said “I’m so glad you aren’t another youngster like my last Cellie.”(I guess the term “youngster” is relative to who uses it). Still he is quiet, respectful, and super grateful to watch my TV.

June 21, 2018 Thursday

I got another “major write-up” last night because my cellie propped our door open so he could go out an extra time to tier. When the guard found it, my cellie denied that he had done it, so we both got the write-up. Obviously I’m pissed about this, but my cellie did say “Bob, that was my bad” to me so I guess, by prison rules, all is forgiven. When I go to disciplinary about it, I’m going to “tell-all” and beg them to give me a cellie like me (nonviolent, passive, middle-aged sex offender), or else place me on “walk alone status” and return me to Ely. It really sucks here living with young and dumb thugs. I guess I spoke too soon when I said the return of my Prozac, as well as the cellie who understands respect are

working in concert together.” My cellie is an improvement from the last one but he is beginning to show his true colors. He’s another “troublemaking pretend dropout.”

Cellie Four

June 24, 2018 Sunday

I last wrote on Thursday the 21st and now all my complaints are moot. On Friday morning the 22 of June a young hothead named “Black” was moved onto the unit. Black’s cellie was an older man named Mr. Clark. Mr. Clark is totally insane and Black refused to house with him. Well, I prefer insane to young and dumb. The guard simply had Black and me trade places, in this place of no convenience bed moves. I do plan to bring this up in disciplinary hearing. So my current cellie is Mr. Clark. I listen to his sermons about how Jesus is his Savior, and that Jesus could love me too if my heart was not so hard. It is not ideal but far better than where I have been. If I’m in a contentious mood, I’ll participate in a discussion, even though the opinions of Mr. Clark’s words are true, as proven by Mr. Clark’s interpretation of the Bible. God would not allow Mr. Clark to spread falsehoods, so the fact that Mr. Clark speaks it, proves its truths are nonnegotiable. If I can bring someone joy by listening, it is a small thing to do. I do remind him not to “should upon me” and if he does so, I’ll refuse to engage him.

He did ask me to teach him to diagram a sentence, as he plans to diagram many of his favorite scriptures. I believe he thinks he is tricking me into reading the Bible, but it kills time, and I enjoy the structure of diagramming a sentence. What an odd pair he and I are, but my stress level is way down.

June 25 Monday 8 PM

I am again being reminded that no good deed goes unpunished. Trying to honor my cellie’s request to teach him how to diagram a sentence has opened a Pandora’s box. A tool for showing how one part of speech can relate to another gets really messy when used on Scripture. A single sentence having multiple clauses, meaningless “and it came to pass”es “yea”es is bad enough but is “saved” a noun or a verb? My cellie insists it’s a Proper Noun. ...

I’m told daily how much he pities me for my “sinful ways.” So much so that I want to scream. I’ve given up thinking there is any point in expressing my point of view to him, as when I do so, he says “if you were

enlightened you would not feel that way,” or “that’s Satan speaking through you.” Then again, crazy is better than stupid and violent. I try to be a good cellie and listen to him in a respectful way, knowing that, much like the sauerkraut at dinner, “this too shall pass.”

June 27, 2018, Wednesday

Every day in here seems to offer new frustrations. Yesterday my last cellie finally gave me the magazines that the guard slid under my door on Thursday night, hours after I moved. I assume it took him a few days to read all of my mail. These people have zero integrity, but want to talk about respect. Meanwhile my new cellie spent several hours yesterday explaining how he does not “preach” to me but he is simply “being an encouragement to me that I might return from my sinful ways and come onto Christ.” But religious zeal is far better than thuggish stupidity.

I go out to tier only four times a week, but my cellie goes out every tier and every yard, so I get some time alone in my cell as well. With so few people (14) the group, but still seven showers, four phones and a microwave, it is possible to use them. The unit (which is supposed to be a punishment) is nearly ideal for me as far as High Desert State Prison goes. No fellow boy-lovers to talk to, and no art supplies are the only downsides. Hopefully I can keep a good cellie for a while. I did get a major write-up for refusing housing assignment, and the disciplinary committee will decide upon my punishment, but, given the situation, I hope they go easy on me. Perhaps 30 days of no visits (I’ve not had one yet). I would be amazed if I am given “hole-time,” as the “hole” has no room for people who should be given it.

June 29, 2018 – Friday

It’s Friday, the 29 June and my mind is a mess. I was reading an article from the Economist when I actually laughed out loud at a quote: “Once you correct for racial bias, Harvard is not racially biased.” The doubletalk struck me as funny. My cellie read the article and had a very different viewpoint. In response to his telling me how I cannot possibly understand the plight of black men in America, I said “I think by my being a pedophile, I have some grasp on the concept of experiencing hatred.” I disagree with racism now more than ever before after meeting and living with him. I’m going to make an effort to drop my lifelong prejudices, but society does not help the situation. Why would “race?” even be part of an application to Harvard?

I will say that my cellie’s daily rants against “Whites,” “LGBTQ,” “Mormons,” etc. make it difficult, but I remind myself that he is an

ignorant ass-hole. Not because of his race, but because of his personality. All in all, a crazy jerk is better than a gangsta thug. If living with him is an inspiration to purge myself of racial bigotry, it might be a good thing. But this guy is really nuts. If you went to an open casting for the role of background patient in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, the director would not give him the part due to "Overacting." Did I mention that he is crazy?

July 8, 2018 Sunday

My cellie no longer speaks to me, as he cannot stand the sight of me. It is my fault. I "exposed my nakedness" to him by changing my shirt without constructing a privacy tent out of sheets. I wrongly assumed that simply facing away from him would be good enough. He said "like you did to your victims, you ruined my innocence." So now I live in silence. No more daily sermons from him. Why should I get all of the crazy ones?

[My cellie] had a long talk at me (not "with" me). He explained to me that as a nonbeliever, I have nothing of substance to add to any conversation so he will not listen to me.

I replied by asking to state three thoughts:

1. "Do you realize how offensive your statements are?"
2. If we each had a stenographer recording our words, your words would be a book while mine would be one page ..."

And he interrupted me to explain in great detail, using many Scriptures, that "only a sinner is offended by the truth" and "the quantity of words is less important than quality." I simply gave up. This dude is insane. I want to say to him "Christians like you turn believers into atheists." I never did get to say my third point.

- 0 -

My cellie had a really tough day today, as the thugs got on his case. The dude does not know when to shut up. I'm waiting for someone to beat him to a bloody pulp, and, as much as I hate to say this... He deserves a good ass-beating, the racist son of a bitch. I know that I have had racial biases myself at times, and I'm now ashamed of myself for such stupidity, but my cellie's example has made me see more clearly. "An asshole of any race still spouts shit".

Actually I have a really busy weekend planned. [*Here he mentions eight different Harry Potter movies that will be on TV and that he plans to watch.*] So when I next write I'll have seen all eight movies.

I'm writing again sooner than I expected. It is Sunday morning the 15th of July and I just got back from breakfast. I'm waiting for pill call. I'm on schedule with Harry Potter. I'll watch *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* and veg out in front of the TV for the rest of the day. I really want to scream "will you keep your racist homophobic and Christian commentary to yourself!" But doing so will only make the tension in my cell worse. There is no point in arguing with Stupid, but he is ruining my Harry Potter weekend, which seems to be partly sponsored by HIV prevention medication. Every time it shows, he comments about how disgusting it is. He is also pointing out all of the biblical references in Harry Potter, for example: "It is evil to kill people for pleasure" comes from the 10 Commandments. I wrongly assume that to be a nearly universal human value, but I know now that it's only a Christian belief. I honestly thinks he believes his own bullshit.

July 18, 2018 –Wednesday

On a note of sadness, last night on America's Got Talent, "Patches" got cut. [*Patches is a cute white boy-rapper that Robert liked.*] My cellie cheered because "Rapping is for black people, but as usual, white folks want to steal it." I remind myself, via self-talk, that "Racist and Crazy is better than young, dumb, and violent," so I do not scream at him. My cellie speaks and I mentally repeat my mantra... "Racist and Crazy is better than young, dumb and violent." I am sure any further effort to improve my situation will make life worse. Am I "Learning the System" or "Giving-up Hope?" For now I am just not sure.

July 22, 2018– Sunday

It is Sunday night, the 22nd of July. I need to gather my thoughts and share them, so I find myself once again writing to you. Today marks one complete month of living with my cellmate. I felt it was time to give voice to some points of contention. I did so in the form of a letter, so he could not interrupt my every thought. He did not take it well. He covers my bed with a hanging sheet so that he does not see me "prostate on my bed." I've asked him to leave a gap for airflow, and so the guards can see me at count time. He seems convinced that my true motive is to get to see him undress. I also asked that he not give voice to every homophobic idea that enters his mind. He points out every homosexual character, line, or idea on TV. by saying "Oh, gross." After some conversation which never got heated, he has vowed not to speak to me, but rather will use his "mysterious connection to the warden" to get me moved out. Did I mention that this guy is crazy? So I'm going to go into complete passive-aggressive mode and not give him a single thought as I "do my time." When he voices a

homophobic comment, or otherwise derogatory words, I'll say "I find your words to be insulting." I'll no longer ignore it. I realized he finds my very existence to be insulting, but I cannot cease to exist. So much drama.

July 26, 2018 – Thursday

Hello again. Thursday, 26th of July now. I've not written in several days because my mind has been on the cellie drama. My efforts to go into complete passive-aggressive mode have failed. Much as on December 8th, 1941 the US declared war on Japan... I am at war. This guy has more buttons than an elevator control-panel factory and as long as I am within the rules, I plan to push them all. I made every concession to try to make him comfortable because I believe cellies can improve each other's lives or make them worse. I do not know how much I have told you about the physical layout of the cells. I am on the lower bunk and he is on the upper. I asked him to trade and he refused. At first there was just a simple single privacy sheet from the hooks to the shelf and only when the toilet was being used. Then he decided the very side of me was offensive and another one was hung to conceal my bed. It allowed my face to be seen from the window in the door, and my fan at the foot of the bed provided a nice airflow. The original privacy sheet did prevent me from seeing the TV on my shelf so I moved it to the foot of my bed. He claimed the lower shelf was his area. On Sunday, when the original privacy sheet began extending from wall-to-wall, I wrote my 30-day letter. Since then I have reclaimed my sheet just so he can't have it, and he has insisted on 100% cell rules compliance which means no hooks, names notebooks, or pictures on the walls of the shared areas. All of our property is on our shelf, bed, or in the "tub" stored on the floor under my bunk. He thinks that this will somehow upset me, and I'll break. My attitude is "Cool. Let's dance." I've got a secret weapon in this battle. Writing to you keeps me calm. I will say that I still feel that crazy is much better than young dumb and violent. You need not say Bubby, you're acting like a child. I know that I am but my patience and good sense have snapped. I am at war!

July 26, 2018 – cont.

It is still Thursday, 26th of July, but just after 10:00 PM. The drama got rather heated today when my cellie came from the yard, and noticed my TV is no longer at the foot of my bed, but rather is now on my shelf. He took one look and then hung the sheet to block me into my bed, thus dividing the 84 square feet of living space 20 for me and 64 him, with him getting the sink, toilet, and shelf, included including my TV. I said "This is not going to work.

He said “Too bad,” so I pulled down the sheet. He rehung it, I again pulled it down. Then he knocked my TV off my shelf and onto the floor. It did not break. By every rule of prison life, I should beat the shit out of him. Instead I hit the emergency call-button. When the guard replied 20 minutes later by asking, “Is everything alright?,” I said “No, I need a guard at cell 24.”

Twenty more minutes passed, and the guard said, “Are you refusing to house?”

I do not need another write-up. I wrote out a statement about what happened. For the rest of the day my cellie made empty threats such as: while showing me a sharpened pencil, he said, “You need to die.”

“Are you threatening me?”

“Take it anyway you want. I’m going to bury you.”

“Thank you for that fine example of being a Christian. Jesus would be proud.”

“You don’t know anything about it, but you’ll find out. Your judgment day is coming sooner than you know.”

“Oh? Another empty threat?”

“Shut up! Don’t talk to me. You just want some conversation.”

“It was you who opened this dialogue, not me. I think you might want the conversation.”

Okay okay, I poke at him, but he is crazy, and it seems to be rubbing off on me. About an hour of silence later he said, “You don’t know who you’re messing with. I’m going to get your family.”

“You don’t even have the pull to get a cellie moved out.”

“Oh it’s going to move way beyond that. I want to see you suffer.”

“Another fine example of your Savior’s teachings.”

“You’re just a dirty pervert. I’m going to make sure your son knows you lust after little boys.”

“He already knows.”

“That is just as disgusting as you are. I’m going to make sure you can’t ever see another boy on TV. I’m going to break it. Make sure you go back to Ely.” (Ely is the state’s maximum security yard.)

“No, you’re going to have to accept it and we’re stuck together.”

I'm very careful not to make any threats myself nor to use profanity, but I do use a lot of insincere "Thank yous."

Finally, about an hour ago, he again dropped down the sheet. I simply rolled off my bed to sit on the floor so I could see my TV. He said when I close up that curtain you are not going to come out."

"Sorry, that is not your call to make."

That was the last thing he said. I did submit another written complaint about his threats and I got a signed receipt. If he breaks my TV now, the prison is responsible. In all honesty, my cellie is all bark and no bite.

Just because he is wrong does not make my previous attitude any less so. I was a bigot in far too many ways. I never touched a "nonwhite boy" and even my kiddie porn was all Caucasian. To me, my breakthrough is in finally truly seeing race as simply melanin level, nothing more. It may sound stupid, but this is a revelation in my heart. I've known it in my mind but my inner bigot was there. My crazy cellie seems to have killed off my inner bigot.

July 27, 2018 – Friday

It is now Friday the 27th. I spoke to a lieutenant today about my cellmate, but he took no action. My two choices are basically live in hell or go to the hole. The hole is looking better and better. Tonight I was watching a 20/20 special about the cave rescue. My cellie got down off his bunk to stand in front of my TV saying "you're not going to look at little boys you dirty pervert." Right now I really wish I was one of those young and dumb violent thugs that I would just hit him on the jaw, but I'm not violent! Right now I really wish I was.

July 28, 2018 – Saturday

Another outburst. He destroyed my coaxial cable. I again called for officer assistance which was pointless. I quit. He wins.

...Remember. The entire upper bunk and lower shelf are also his. I get one half the area of the floor under the beds, my bunk, a corner of the lower shelf for my toiletries, and one of four hooks. I had to fight for the bins in the permanent curtain to be a couple of inches from my bed. He wanted it to touch my bed frame, but I said that I needed to get my stuff under my half of the bed. After this was set up he promised "quiet coexistence." Except now he is preaching again.

July 29, 2018 – Sunday

Quiet coexistence seems only to apply as long as I clean according to his instructions because “Black folks clean better. White boys don’t know how to clean.”

I leave my “tent” only to use the toilet (I must scrub it when done) and for leaving the cell for meals or tier time. Basically I’m his bitch who should only speak to say “Yessum Massa.” But I’ll play the game rather than beat the shit out of him since the prison will do nothing. I am keeping a detailed log of all of the interactions between us in preparation of a cruel and unusual punishment claims, unless something changes soon. So that is my life. On the bright side, Little League baseball is coming soon. I’m stocking up on snacks and I’ll totally close off the privacy curtain during the games. I’ll totally ignore him.

August 10, 2018

I have been delivered! My time in level three is over and I got moved back to level two, just in time for me to enjoy the Little League World Series. My new cellie does not talk much, but I assume he “knows how to do time.” His inmate number is much older than mine.

Cellie Five

August 24 – Friday

After this weekend I need to get myself into a routine. My cellie goes to bed at 8:30 pm, so I try to be “lights out” by then (light from T.V. not included). He does not talk at all. We go days without speaking. Not in a bad way. We both simply “Do our own time.” I find it a tad bit lonely, but it is such an improvement over “Young, dumb, and violent” or CRAZY.

September 2 – Sunday

It is Sunday, 2nd of September, and slowly I’m getting into a daily routine as I continue to learn my cellie’s idiosyncrasies. While he is a huge improvement over my last crazy, this new one has some quirks of his own. I really wish I could read what I would have to say about me as a cellie. Would it be all nice or would I get under my own skin? Sadly I will never really describe how it is to live with me. I have a bias.

I would describe my current cellie as being self-centered. He does not tolerate the basic sounds of life which disturb his silence. I’ve not seen the movie, *A Quiet Place*. I imagine my cellie would view such a world as being Utopia. For the most part, I ignore him complaining about normal

sounds such as the turning of a page from a book, or the noise of a pencil being returned to the box of others, yet I strive for total silence after he turns out his lamp for the night. I do my reading and writing during the day. He is also very much a bully to others. A “new” Christian, he will still knock over others in his rush for a phone if someone gets in his way. I never try to leave the cell for tier time before he does. He is like an offensive line-man in front of a running-back. I just keep out of the way. He should go home in January as he was given a three-year parole violation in January, 2016 after a one-year in both 2014 and 2012. He served 25 years from 1985 to 2010 originally. The three-year dump inspired him to “give his life to Christ.” I assume in 2020, he will get a five-year parole violation. I hope I’m wrong.

September 9, 2018 – Sunday

It is Sunday, 9th of September. I am trying not to write too loudly, as my cellie mentioned the noise I make while drawing lines on an envelope. I guess I forgot to use a piece of cardboard to mute the sound of the pen scraping. I guess I could point out his own noise such as the crinkle as he turns a page on one of his four Bibles, but I then remind myself of some past cellies, and that puts things in perspective.

The life with my cellie is very quiet. He had a visit today. I did not even know, nor did I say “I hope you had a good visit,” upon his return. We say nothing. Not in an “I’m pissed-off so I’ll ignore you” kind of way – more like two strangers in an elevator, or two men at adjoining urinals.