
Surviving Detroit



Book One
Normal Strange
By Chip Cook



Having milk delivered was more fun from a horse drawn wagon. I'm on the horse at 2200 Edison Ave.

Detroit, Michigan in the early 1950s.

Sift through your past to find yourself.

- Fortune Cookie Wisdom -

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By Chip Cook

This writing is the prequel to Chip Cook's paranormal autobiography. The first writing "A Very Strange Life" outlined a series of "strange events" occurring throughout my lifetime. However all "strange events" do not have to be necessarily supernatural.

In hindsight even some of my relationships were a little unusual too.

I wrote two different books trying to isolate the paranormal strange from the normal strange. However my little eighty-four year old Grandmother begs the question if these two topics can really be separated?

This is to introduce you to the measure of the Author and his life perspective.

C.C.



Mom and me at the Gross Point Yacht Club on Lake St. Clair

Very Early Memories

Be thankful you cannot remember too much of your early years. I imagine the birth process is not a load of laughs, and I don't even want to think about circumcision. Ouch!

Having said this, I do have extremely early memories. The earliest thought process was concerned with the brightness of light being hard to deal with and trying to turn away from it. During this time period, there was a growing awareness of being lifted up and down from place to place. Each place had different qualities serving to differentiate them from one to the other. I seem preoccupied categorizing the differences. As a baby, what else did one do other than be nourished with milk?. Even though I was unaware of people I defined different individuals by their touch, smells and even texture. Interestingly the strongest memory was the shock that these bodies came with a face too. First I saw eyes! A transformational event was when the entire face identified the individual. My next memory was a sense of prioritizing individuals by their usefulness to satisfy my needs. I soon learned being "fussy" was useful to get attention. This was the first interconnected block of information I remember. There were other fleeting impressions not connect to each other. Therefore they did not carry much meaning. My next big block of memories centered on sleep. It seems I did not sleep more than a couple of hours each night. I actually can remember, when I closed my eyes, I could see what later would be called a kaleidoscope of shapes in sepia tones. What I discovered, and what I fondly remembered was being pushed around the block in the middle of the night to help me sleep. From my perspective, it was mesmerizing. First was the rhythm of the sound of the steel wheels caps as the baby buggy clicked and clacked over the seams of the cement sidewalks. The ebb and flow of the streetlights shining in the carriage was rhythmic too. The effect was to override the optic stimulation and lull me to sleep. At the time, it just felt good.

An interesting fact of the story was I kept track of the number of right hand turns the buggy made. I knew three turns defined going around the block. Since we lived on the corner, I knew enough to fuss just after the third turn. The result was a second loop or “more buggy.” In the 1990s, researchers from Yale claimed some babies’ optic nerves did not fully develop until a year after birth. They theorized this might result in infant sleep problems due to nerve stimulation. Another study said infants seemed to have the ability to count. Neither conclusion surprised me in the least, but my vivid memories seem unusual.



I am looking for trouble in the kitchen.

The Alleys of Detroit

I grew up playing in the alleys of Detroit. They were filled with the unexpected. It was where discarded parts of life were on their way somewhere. Optimistically I guess to be recycled. Pessimistically a step in the removal process on the road to destruction would sum it up. The subculture of each alley told a different story. If they were too clean or too dirty I did not find them interesting. They held the same kind of fascination for me, as a library held for a bookworm. I felt immune from this chaos. Little did I know the kind of deterioration I found so interesting in the alleys would make a jump to society. Detroit was becoming infected. It was becoming a really big alley too. Mike, Johnny, Gentry and I were friends.

They were black, and I was white. Surprisingly our small gang did not see any difference between us. We were just “the guys,” and we could run and play in the imagination rich alleys of 12th Street and Edison Avenue. We had great fun playing. We just poked around and wondered about anything and everything. There were also “the girls.” Suzie and Gloria were white girls who lived blocks away. All the surrounding neighborhoods had been “block busted” by realtors wanting to make a fast buck. They used the fear of the blacks moving in as a motivator to get white Detroiters to move out. This process created a mostly black inner Detroit and a mostly white outer Detroit.

I must have been the only “white guy” for miles therefore Suzie and Gloria were encouraged to play with me. As a preschooler, I was never quite sure how to play with them. They were only a year older, but there seemed to be some kind of rivalry going on between them. They each wanted something from me. The boys did not seem to want anything from me. They just wanted someone to play with.

The guys were easier to understand. Since these white girls lived blocks away and the black boys only lived houses away, friendship with the boys were easier. At this age I was still unaware of white verses black.



Back row left: Suzie. Right: Gloria. Bottom row left: Me Right:
Mark N.

[By the age of five all three friends had moved away.]



Top Left: Mike M. Middle Left: Johnny M.
Bottom right: Gentry S.

The Family

My family was comprised of six individuals and three generations. I thought of us as three levels. The top level was Grandma and Grandpa or Mary and Edward Walker to the outside world. The second level was Mom and Dad or Polly and S. Graham Cook. The bottom level was my twelve-year-old sister Coe Cook and me.

This family joke was not explained to me until much later in my life. As an enfant in a stroller, I was in the right position to run my little hand up the long legs of women riding the elevator at J. L. Hudson's department store.

Strangely I retained memories of some of these events. Innocently I just liked feeling the texture of their nylon stockings. As you can imagine, the ladies would let out a scream. Mom just kept her cool and said, "Sorry, but he is a chip off the old block." I never exactly asked what she meant by that excuse, but I could only guess. I was the bane of my sister's existence. With a twelve-year age difference, I was a problem; and she would not let me forget it. Like a cat, her tool of revenge was to ignore me. Later Mom said it broke her heart to see me so excited when Coe walked up the front porch steps returning from work. Since she totally ignored my existence as she walked by on the way to her room, I went from being excited to being introverted and sad.

However I would not be ignored for long. It became a game, and I made up the rules most of the time. The games became really interesting when she started to date. I would hide for hours in the living room and pop up during a romantic kiss, but this only worked twice since she would search the house to clean it of any threats. Then I took a more direct approach. I would ask a new date, "So!

When are you going to marry her?" I found this to be a very effective tool. I was not a monster. I was just playing my part in a game she created called "I Do Not Want Him to Be My Brother." Other than my sister, I was a joy for the rest of the family.

On a few occasions in his fifties, my Grandfather had been cheated out of fees earned for work as an engineering consultant. Hence he stopped working and turned the responsibility of running the house over to Dad. No longer using his home office, he took over the family den to sit and read in the corner. I grew up thinking this was the natural order of things. To me he was like a king on his throne. At a very young age, we held court together. I was an open mind at the feet of a master, and I wanted to learn from him. Only years later did I look back and see just how broken he must have been. Our relationship was a shared unspoken bond. We sat and talked in our favorite place and just enjoyed the world around us. Dad spent a lot of time working as a salesman. When he was at home the house needed constant care. If this was not enough work, he also taught silver and gold jewelry making to a small class. He said, "This is money for the family to have fun." The only time we spent together was when I could help him out or when he was building something for me. He never had to get mad at me. I never openly created a problem. I cannot say I was ever afraid of him, but I did respect his position of power. We got along fairly well because I knew his rules.

Mom and I were the closest as is the rule of nature. She was the lawmaker and a well of unconditional love. She seemed to organize the family's inner world and also navigate the family's outer world. As a result, I always felt safe. She did not work in the outer world, but she never stopped working in our inner world. She loved animals, and the house always had six cats and a dog. Living in the city meant a never-ending chain of life and death dramas connected to these furry people. White Sox was a year old, when I was born. He grew to be one tough big cat, but he loved me more than any dog would have. He lived to be twenty-four and died while I was in graduate school.

Vets were used to sew up the wounds, give shots and that was just about it. The decision of life and death was simpler then. If Grandpa was "the chair," Grandma was "the kitchen." She created wonderful smells and tasty surprises. The relationships between each of us were seemingly simple only on the surface.

At first look, Dad worked; and Grandpa read and looked after me. Grandma cooked and waited on Grandpa as well as kept an eye on me too. Mom paid the bills and kept the family operating smoothly.

With the advantage of time, I could see a problem. Love comes in many shapes and sizes, and respect is only one form of love.

We had respect. However love needs to be free to evolve and be playful. It seems I was the provider of this part of the equation.

Without knowing it, I was the glue holding these separate individuals together. I am glad I was unaware of my family role. The responsibility would have been crushing. It is little wonder my sister had jealousy issues with me.



Grandpa, White Sox, Suzie, and Me.

My World

Our house was on a corner lot with a good size back yard. At my young age I did not understand why Dad and Grandpa enjoyed building all kinds of things to keep me occupied. I had a tree house with a long swinging rope ladder, a very long swinging rope with a large steel triangle forming a kind of a trapeze and a rotating polygon bench we called the merry-go-round. No wonder I was popular in the neighborhood. From an old bike Dad created something he called a Chip- clipper. The bike was the engine he would peddle and the platform seats would hold six kids. They sat three by three and back to back. Everyone wanted a ride, but I think Dad did not understand how much time and work it would entail. Therefore it was not used often; and when it was stolen, he did not seem too unhappy.



I'm seating on the rope ladder to my tree house.

In the winter, I would pack snow on the three levels of the front steps. I would strap on cheap skis from The Salvation Army and fly down the front yard out into the street. Over the years, only once was there a close call. I also have other vivid childhood memories.

Once a month, we had a tradition of driving to China town on Sunday night. As far as we were concerned, The Golden Dragon was the only Chinese restaurant worth going to. Bing was always our waiter, he called me “lice and glavy” (rice and gravy) because those were almost the first words I spoke. The family ordered the same meal every time. Our order was Wonton Soup family style, Egg Rolls, Egg Foo Yong and Subgum Fried Rice. And when we felt rich, we added Almond War Sue Chicken for \$2.25. My family and I dined there over twenty-two years until 1972 when Bing and the owner Lewie died. Besides their delicious food, I loved them both for all the great memories.

Besides being a professional volunteer, my Mom was active in many clubs. She liked the Book Club, but her passion was The Woman’s Club. Incidentally all three women of the house were members of the Women’s Club. I took advantage of my youth and Mom’s membership to take swimming lessons for four years.

After each lesson, I would wait at the front door to talk to the doorman Mr. Jones. Our friendship did not end with the swimming lessons. Much to my surprise, our paths crossed again in 1966 at the Detroit Yacht Club. Until his death in the 1970s, he dutifully guarded the front gate.

Eating Habits

Everyday family habits fell into set patterns. Mid morning Grandpa made his slow trek downstairs to his chair. On cue Grandma would appear from a side door to serve his breakfast. This pattern never changed! His TV tray was always arranged to his specification.

At the top right was a large cup of coffee with sugar and milk. This was his first item of interest. A big bowl of homemade oatmeal with more milk and sugar took center stage. Almost burnt whole-wheat toast with butter and guava jam was at the top left of the tray. On the lower left was a half of a pre-sliced grapefruit and a large glass of orange juice completed the feast.

When he traveled and oatmeal was not on the menu, two eggs sunny-side-up would do. He lived for ninety-two years. He must have been eating right or something.

My breakfast was simple and consisted of white buttered toast and orange juice with a twist. The O.J. was in a small bowl so I could dunk the toast in the juice. Grandpa sat in his den and I sat in the living room in front of the TV. I know it sounds strange; but for thirteen years, that was breakfast.

At dinner the adults ate in the dining room, and I had my little table set up in front of “the tube.” This was perfect for me. When I did not like the taste of something, it was easier to throw it in a large urn by the fireplace than to be made to eat it. Especially Brussels sprouts and liver were tops on that list. This worked for a while until Mom smelled a peculiar odor coming from the urn. I was busted! This ended the hiding of bad food. However more care was given in what was put on my plate.

Friendships

Our large living room was the place where I gathered with my friends to watch old movies. Three funny memories stand out to me. My first memory was during a Tarzan movie. The African warriors attacking with spears transfixed us. Johnny’s mouth dropped open and asked, “What’s them? Without dropping a beat, Gentry responded, “Them’s natives.” I found it very funny, but I did not laugh at them. My second memory occurred on a cold day. We had a fire in the fireplace.

When we came in to see some movies, Johnny's mouth dropped open and he asked, "What's that?" Mom said, "Why Johnny that's a fireplace. You have a fireplace. Don't you?" Johnny proudly announced, "We have a furnace?" Mom had to leave the room to hide her laughter. My third memory was retold around the dinner table. I had had a birthday party with all the guys, and their parents were also invited for cake and ice cream. Mike lived just next door. Our dads were friends too. Mike's father Ernie walked over to Dad and put his arm around his neck. He asked, "So...how does it feel to be a minority?" They laughed.

The Silver Lady

Mom loved silver. Before there were discount stores, Mom created an interesting niche for herself. Money was always a problem no matter if you were rich or poor. Wedding registries were as popular then as there are today. The bride hoped for complete sets without duplication; but of course this rarely happened. Thus the bride was left to fill out her own silver pattern. This is where Mom stepped in. She had taken out ads in newspapers advertising she could help brides finish off their patterns at a discount. The phone was ringing off the hook. She had established a working relationship with a silver dealer named Mr. C. R. Hill. He did not want his name used so Mom was his front person. The idea was to save people some money. Any profit was split 50-50 between Mom and Mr. Hill. Everyone was happy. One day Mr. Hill called Mom and said, as a dealer, he had been contacted about settling the Alger Estate. The Alger family's wealth came from the auto industry.

Since this job was too much for Mr. Hill to handle, he wondered if Mom would be interested in the job. After much deliberation with the family, she accepted the challenge. The job entailed traveling to their mansion on the Detroit River. Mom had to weigh, organize and log in all of the approximate 10,000 ounces of silver.

This was no small job; but at the \$1.00 per ounce price to Mom, there was a very good profit to be made.

Mom had clients who were hungry for silver pieces. Ornamental dinning room silver was a big market. The business became a family affair. Grandma kept the log, and Grandpa weighed the silver. My job was to run and gather the silver pieces from all the wings of the mansion.

Mom orchestrated, labeled and packed the processed silver. For an entire two days our home street was filled with cars in the afternoon. Most of her customers were schoolteachers. Mom had just doubled the price to \$2.00 per ounce. This was still a good deal. However she kept the items she really wanted. After two days of selling, it was time to go back to the “River” and start locating more silver. It was like fishing in a barrel. The project paid for itself.

Mom also bought other items from the estate at outrageously low prices. Our house was looking pretty good by the time the estate was closed. There was enough money to buy a new car, take a few vacations and still keep a very hefty savings.

Mom was known as the Silver Lady of Edison Ave.



Christmas was always wonderful.

Holidays

Holidays have their traditions and every family has their own special way of celebrating. Our Christmas had three phases. The first phase began with Hudson's Department Store unveiling their spectacular Christmas window displays following the Thanksgiving Day Parade. In those days, people waited for hours to see the magic unfold.

The second phase was the most important part of the holiday season. I vividly remember Grandpa in his chair sitting next to our beautiful tree. Christmas morning was an explosion of happiness. In our house, the giving and receiving of gifts was the high light of the day. One specific Christmas, our lives resembled the movie *A Christmas Story*. Although it was filmed in Chicago, the neighborhood resembled Detroit. I was thrilled when Santa brought me the Red Rider BB gun as in the story. Everyone thought I would shoot out an eye. After celebrating a little too much, the twist to my story was Dad and Tom Davis somehow ended up in a shooting contest with a Christmas tree ball as a target. Unfortunately on the other side of the tree was a plate glass French door. The resulting hole was very small and scotch tape worked well to keep the cold air out. Needless to say, Grandma and Mom were none too happy. Grandpa and I tried to stay neutral.

Detroit would not be Detroit without the automobile. The third phase was the Annual Detroit Auto Show. Like Hudson's windows, people waited in lines to see the new models. This was proof that the future would be bright and good. My parents would always buy me a souvenir model car to add to my collection.

The holidays ended with New Years Eve. Traditionally friends were invited over to the house. We celebrated feasting on boiled shrimp with cocktail sauce, and of course the main highlight was Chinese take-out. It is funny how the little traditions define moments in time.

Around My Bedroom

The everyday things were important too. In my case, it was the action in the bedroom. At this young age there was no thought of sex yet in case you are thinking that. By action I'm talking about the way my room was energized by its location with the street. You have to imagine the situation. My room was in the back corner of the house and overlooked 11th Avenue. This was a one-way avenue, heading south with traffic lights three streets north of my room. The traffic came in blocks of cars. One moment there was darkness and dead silence in my room. Next a distant growing rumble of cars could be heard. Like giant piano keys, lights showed up at one end of my dark room; and they moved across three walls disappearing as the traffic thundered by my window. Then there was dead silence again. As the next light changed, visually the piano keys reappeared up my wall and across the ceiling over and over again. You might think this must have been torture, but it is interesting what our brain can normalize.

The noise seemed friendly to me. However the nighttime summers in Maine and our later move to the suburbs was just the opposite. It took awhile to adjust to no lights and only the sound of crickets.

“Somebody...Grab Him!”

In my opinion, Mom was an activist; and I tried to learn from her fine example. One day while backing out of our driveway, we heard a woman screaming from the bus stop. As she struggled to hold on to her pocketbook, the man over came her. He crossed the avenue and ran two blocks down the alley towards 12th Street.

Like a dart, Mom drove down the next street to try and cut him off. From the back seat of the car, I sat in silence as the drama unfolded before my eyes. She had turned into some kind of Mrs. Lone Ranger, and I had never seen this side of her before.

We could see the man running with the pocketbook. He crossed 12th Street running towards O'Dell's Drug Store and then turned the corner. Mom pulled into a parking lot and gave chase. I was not sure what I was supposed to do, but I wanted to see the action. I got out of the car and ran after her. As I turned the corner heading towards O'Dell's Store, I could hear Mom yelling, "Stop him! Somebody grab him!" People were just trying to get out of the thief's way.

As he came towards me, I grabbed at him trying to do as I was being told. Mom stopped dead in her tracks and froze in terror at the sight of me colliding with the crook. I did not do much to slow the guy down, but it knocked me on my ass. She ran up and held me. She asked, "What were you doing?" I replied, "You said to grab him, and I did." Clearly Mom did not know how to respond to my innocent comment and my lack of understanding the danger. Eventually the pocketbook was found near O'Dell's, but the wallet was empty. The thief got away. The woman thanked us and said she had hidden a lot of money in the lining. It was safe due to the commotion of my Mom's hot pursuit. Hastily the crook dumped the bag. It felt good to be of help.

Fortunately situational awareness is almost instinctual. I learned an important lesson, "Pick your battles carefully."



I was born to love. Suzie and I playing in the backyard.

Games

At an early point in my life, I learned it was better to ask for forgiveness rather than to ask for permission. My gang of four just knew this was a fact of life. We exercised great care in not being noticed. At the age of six, our activities included climbing very large trees, using our secret method for getting on the roof, walking five miles downtown to see movies and talking about girls. We hide the truth from our parents by creating an outer behavioral illusion that they wanted to believe. Our isolated inner secrets never went outside the group.

My first sexual anything occurred at the age of five. Mike, Suzie and I were watching the cars speed by on 11th Avenue next to my backyard. Being just a little bored Mike pulled me to one side and offered me a deal. "I'll bet you a quarter you won't go up to Suzie and ask her if you could put your train in her tunnel?"

Not understanding the double meaning, I took his bet and in broad daylight walked up to Suzie and asked Mike's dumb question. I did not know what hit me, but I saw stars and my face was on fire. Later I wondered how she had known the other meaning. I should have learned something that day such as love can hurt; but when it comes to sex, nature benefits from humans being dumb. Suzie's family moved out of the neighborhood a few weeks later. I do not think the two events were connected, but it was the last I saw of Suzie.

However the word got around. A very strange thing happened over at Gloria's house under a comforter she had thrown over my head. I would share the details, but I'm not sure what they really were. I think I got groped a little, but I cannot be sure. Gloria may have been trying to establish her territory; months after this inquisitive behavior, her family moved too. Clearly there were things I needed to know about girls. The streets provided some answers, but they also created more questions.

Boys being boys, accidents happened. However accidents seemed to happen more to me than to Mike. He often got carried away with our playful activities. When he was careless it always seemed to be at my expense. First a 2x4 swung wildly landed on my head requiring stitches. A year later, as Mike swung a bat wildly it caught me across my left eyebrow. This resulted in even more stitches. The last accident was during a game I invented called "bombs away." I had each of us built a fort in our long narrow basement. In almost total darkness, we would try and break down the enemy's fortress throwing tennis balls, basketballs or anything we could find. The first cardboard fort to fall was the loser. It seemed like a simple game, fun at first.

However the second time we played it, Mike found a full gallon of paint and slung it in my direction. In the weak light of the cracked basement door, I saw the gallon flying in slow motion. Judging its trajectory, I tried to dive for safety. It and I made perfect contact in mid-air. I was spun so I landed on my back. When I came to, I was on my back in a pool of blood. My family was relieved I was conscious. As I was sped off to the hospital, again my playing with Mike ended with even more stitches.

My last major childhood accident indirectly involved Mike. I received a new bike with fancy hand breaks. The black Reilly racer was a little too big for me, but I was growing fast. My friends rode with me for a test ride. I decided to go around the block staying on the sidewalk. At the very first turn, I encountered a big problem. Hidden by a large bush, Mike and one other guy came to a stop right around the corner. Due to a car passing in the street, the only path left for me was in the direction of a large tree. Being inexperienced I only squeezed my right hand brake. This was not a good move on my part, but it is a common mistake with first time hand break users. I was catapulted over the handlebars and hit the tree with the right side of my face. The rough bark of the tree did damage, and I was knocked out again. At the hospital, I reacted as a very unhappy child would. My sister had to deal with the hospital orderly and me at odds. I could not understand why I had to take off my clothes when the problem was with my face. All I wanted to do was just go home. I was not feeling very good as you can imagine.

The orderly pulled my sister into another room and started to tell her something. They had to fight back their laughter. It was necessary to be kept overnight for observation. He and she anticipated my next reaction. Continuing my torture, the only bed I could use was a crib in the girl's ward. This was not a laughing matter. I was naked in some kind of smock with no back entering an all girls' ward. Was this even legal? What was with the crib at the opposite end of a long room? The bathroom was at the other end of the room!

If I had to go, I would first crawl out of the crib with my butt showing running the gauntlet of feminine eyes to get to the toilet. I was fuming by the time I was “placed” in a hell of pure embarrassment. The food was bad, the crib smelled and they would not let me sleep. All night long they would wake me up every two hours to check my vital signs. At four in the morning, I finally made a break for the toilet. Crawling on my hand and knees with one hand and holding the smock closed over my butt with the other hand, I made the journey to relief. I don’t think I was seen, and morning could not come fast enough.

However morning came too soon for my liking. I had just fallen asleep for the first time. The nurse wanted me awake for a sponge bath. Was she kidding? Even with the privacy curtain, there was no privacy. At least she let me do it myself. Thank God! An hour later, Mom came around the corner with the good news I was being released. I looked like hell, but I was going home to recover in my own room. Get me out of this crazy place! I would never forget it.

I also grew up at the start of the television era. I marked time by the daily news reports; and from this window on the world I tried to learn more about life. My first romantic crush was Annette Funicello. I always watched The Mickey Mouse Club and she was my favorite mouse. Besides her early chest development, it was her beautiful doe-like eyes and turned up smile that warmed my heart.

Later in the 1950s, it was “The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis” that really peeked my imagination. I wanted to be him with one new girlfriend after another. He seemed to be effortlessly romantic and concerned about all his friends’ problems.

If I could have foreseen my romantic future, I would have realized life is not always a comedy sitcom.

Racism

In the first grade, I was exposed to the horrors of racism. Our teacher Miss. Gordon was tasked with the job of teaching a new “learning to read” system. I was assigned the seat in front of her desk.

My classmates did not want to follow her instructions because she was too strict and too uptight. She used corporal punishment to the extreme. Daily she would beat children’s knuckles with a steel ruler.

I was the only white child, and somehow I was the only child never beaten. However I believe she scared me psychologically instead.

My Mom was always on top of things; but before she could finally get me out of that classroom, the damage had already been done.

Perhaps this situation contributed to a learning problem that I never really overcame.

To this day, some of these problems remain. I cannot imagine what it did to all those other classmates. It was the first time I felt the emotion of rage towards anyone.

Years later she was finally fired for locking a child in a school closet and forgetting about him. The police found the child early in the morning, and she was history!



Our house at 2200 Edison Ave. with Tom's Texas Flag

The Texan

In 1958 my sister married a handsome Texan named Tom Davis.

He had been in the army, and he used me as an introduction to my family when we met at the Bob-Bo-Low amusement island in the Detroit River. It was love at first sight for Tom and my sister Coe.

They wed very quickly, and Tom moved his stuff into our attic. Coe and Tom were both going to the University of Michigan to get their BA degrees. One day by sheer luck, I found the mother load of men's magazines in one of his boxes. Finally with my own eyes, I could see the beauty hidden under women's clothes.

By 1950s standards, this was as good as it got...lots of T & A. To my delight, one magazine showed a "bush." How lucky could a guy get? Suddenly to my neighborhood friends, our backyard took second place to our attic; and I even charged a nickel for admission.

What was left to the imagination, I filled in the details using a girl's book teaching about their reproductive system. It was titled, What Every Young Girl Should Know.

Talk about extremes! It was Sex 101 from A to Z.



Coe and Tom's wedding and I am on the lower left.



The Texan was Tom Davis; we liked him, even his gun.

Tom and Coe

Tom and Coe was a story of passion gone wrong. We all loved him. He was a real southern charmer. Not only did my sister love him, she was crazy over him. While attending University of Michigan, Tom started having problems. Coe hid the real problems from us. However we could feel the “sea change” or tension in their relationship when we would visit them.

Tom dropped out of school, but Coe tried to balance their issues and still get a degree. Tom was becoming more and more agitated. After Coe graduated and they moved home, things went bad fast. Supposedly Tom bought and sold old guns. He had “friends” in downtown Detroit. (One friend was the notorious Jack Ruby. He was the man who killed President Kennedy’s assassin in 1963.) These questionable relationships were a growing problem with the family.

One afternoon Mom and I drove up to the house, and there on the roof was Tom with a rifle. After awhile, he came down and explained that a gun deal went bad; and there were people after him. I did not know what to make of it, but it did not sound truthful to me. What did I know? I was just a kid. However his stories just got wilder.

One day I saw my sister crying in front of Mom. I pretended not to notice them. I assumed it was about Tom, and it was indirectly. Coe was pregnant, and Tom had no job. Everything seemed in free fall for all of us, but it got worse.

The shit hit the fan when Tom robbed a bank. This was not your normal heist. On a corner there were two banks. One bank was a state bank and the other was federal. Tom decided to rob the Federal Bank of Detroit. He pushed the written demand for money towards the cashier. Then he turned and walked out of the bank without a cent. He sat in his car waiting for the police to come and arrest him.

I guess it was clear to all; his heart was not in the act. We assume he did not want the responsibility of marriage with a child.

His Texas family included Judges and many other influential people. This was a first offense for him. Since no one was hurt and no money was taken, he was determined to be innocent by reason of insanity in pretrial hearings. He was committed to a psychiatric ward for evaluation and treatment for a personality disorder. I don't think it even went to trial.

He gave my sister a divorce and full custody of the son to be born baby Scott. After a few months, he was released and he left Detroit to return to Texas. However this was not the last we would hear from Tom. That part of the story will be picked up in Maine two years later.

Something about Girls

I did not start out as a peeping tom. However the reverend's three daughters, who lived on the other side of 11th avenue, peaked my interest when they made a lot of sexual sounds. Our windows lined up. Despite the distance, I could hear every word. The conversations about boys were unbelievable. From that distance nothing could be seen anyway, but all the conversations were explicit to say the least.

Even though they walked around half naked, details were only in silhouette. As they grew older and their parents were out of the house, they took turns as watch outs while the third sister entertained different boys. I heard the most unbelievable songs of passion. I knew who was who from the different squeals. I would be lying to say this did not inspire me. Their fun and my fun never ended.

Quite literally, my new interest in the activities of the girls next door brought up a new physical problem. At the ripe old age of seven, what had been a useful tool for peeing had turned into a new appendage with a demanding personality. My new friend imitated the giant plant from the Little Shop of Horrors movie.

The plant would growl at Seamore, "I'm hungry! I need food!" Unaware of the fact all boys go through this right of passage, I had to learn how to handle my new friend quickly. From what I remembered of youth discussions at church, I wondered if this was the animalistic urge we were suppose to overcome. Good luck with living with that idea! Just looking at the world's population told me that idea had not worked. Nature had its own rules, and you are only trying to fool yourself if you think you can ignore them.

This had to be a game of give and take. I could almost deal with my problem privately, but my "labido" could not always be controlled. It came and went independent of my thoughts. Thank goodness for the books I carried on my way to school, when needed they doubled as a privacy shield. Over time my friend and I came to an agreement.

Street Smart

In the city, a guy learned many things early. It was a dangerous place and one had to "feel" the action on the street in order to position oneself for a fast exit. Some genius planned Roosevelt Elementary School to be between Central High School and Durfy Junior High. Every afternoon there was knife fighting in the schoolyard. Red bloodstained shirts were a common sight. My solution was to become a crossing guard. There was safety in numbers; and by the time I left, everyone else had gone home, or to the hospital or to jail. It was the 1950s; and being the only white guy, made me an oddity.

This time period was just on the edge of the racial hostilities growing across the nation. I knew enough not to make friends with any colored girl. Colored was the preferred term in those days, black could be insulting.

In 1960 a woman was murdered while waiting at our bus stop. Happening only a hundred feet from my bedroom, the family decided it was time to move. Detroit was sliding fast into social decline.

This began before I was even born, and to my knowledge, continues to this day. In 1967 the Detroit Race Riots erupted on 12th Street near O'Dell's Drug Store.

Thinking back, this was where I remember buying comic books every Monday. Even today I say, "Detroit is a good place to be from!"

Death in Detroit

As soon as we moved in 1960, I lost touch with my friends. By the late 1970s, Johnny and Gentry were both dead. Johnny was killed in the Vietnam War, and Gentry was shot during a robbery in his own convenience store. Mike followed in his brother's footsteps, and he became a doctor. He married well, and had a bright future. For a while, his parents were proud. However Mike was hiding a big problem. He was a drug user. Until he was busted, he even sold them. His family included judges and politicians, and they came to his aid. He was given a second chance, but he apparently did not learn from his mistakes. After a standoff involving a drug dealing sting operation and a hostage kidnapping of a minor child in a northwest Detroit shopping plaza, Mike was sent to prison for a very long time. Ironically less than a year after his incarceration, his doctor brother died of a drug overdose. A wife, children, and two parents survived him. All wondered what went so wrong with both boys. In the end, I was the lucky one to escape "the alleys of Detroit."



Family on Maine Beach, Coe is pregnant with Scott in 1958

The Beaches of Maine

This is the tale of two worlds. For eleven months of the year we lived in the city of Detroit and for only a few weeks, we vacationed in our village in Maine. It got to the point that the 824 mile drive was almost automatic. It was like going to Heaven every year, but we had to deal with sand and sunburn. We would get so burnt at the beach during the day that all we wanted to do in the evening was to sit in the darkness of the old 1925 Leavitt movie theatre. We sat in box seats and did nothing but pass around burn lotion and fan each other. I think our skin glowed in the dark. Technically my first year on the beach was actually 1948.

Even though I was born in 1949, this trick was possible because my Mom was pregnant that summer. Our family connection with this quaint village actually began many years before my birth.

Since Grandpa had worked for the railroad from the early 1900s, one of the benefits was free rail passage. His sister was an artist who exhibited her paintings in a gallery in the Village. She and other friends raved about the beauty of the village. This started the family's tradition of visiting every summer. The length of the vacations depended on Grandpa's income each year. Due to the Depression and World War II, money was tight. Their annual vacations were put on hold until 1948.

We continued this yearly ritual with "must do" activities when I was just a thought. When not on the beach, there were church suppers, bingo at the fire station and Down East Lobsters / Clam Bakes at The Cove. We would take walks along the Marginal Way "in the broiling sun" just to be rewarded with a bottle of Nugrape Soda at The Lobster Shack. There were also country auctions, hotel dances, watercress sandwiches in the tea houses, live performances at The Playhouse, two movie theatres with movies changing every other day and artists painting outside with local galleries displaying their works. In the summers, Village certainly was a beehive of activity.

Even though we had only a few weeks in vacationland, many people loved to come for the entire summer. This resort village had been a haven for over sixty-years. Everything was choreographed as if in a dance. In later years, I was relieved to find this was very common; and many families evolved their own list of “must do’s” to define their summers in Maine.

In spite of our summer vacation routine, we did not know many people. However we did get to know the owner of The Dunelawn Hotel where we rented. Mrs. H. Smith and her teenage daughters, Susan and Sybil, ran the place with the help of a small staff of girls and two males who doubled as bellhops and lawn/garden staff. Her husband, portly George Smith, seemed to be off fishing most of the time. The mansion had been his childhood home. When his parent died, George inherited the estate and, his sister inherited the money. Land rich and cash poor was a difficult position. To obtain financial stability, he was forced to open the hotel. Their personal costs were very high, and I could see stress on Mrs. Smith’s face. However Dunelawn was successful and attracted theatrical stars who performed at The Playhouse. Watching the rich and famous became part of our fun. However behind the veil of success, it was a workhouse that made even the owners into slaves.

The only TV was in the main house or mansion. As long as I was quiet, I could watch old movies that dominated the three channels after 10 o’clock in the evening. The dead silence in the big old house was interrupted by the tick-tock of the old grandfather clock and an occasional creak of the old wooden floors. The sound of people coming in to go up to their rooms was only a brief interruption of the solitude of the house. The only other sound of activity came from the girl’s dorm located in the basement. I cannot remember exactly when I began to notice the girls who worked in the Village; but at some point before the age of ten, they became very interesting to me. Each carried a drama of some secret nature locked in their hearts.

I could overhear the girls talking in low voices about this guy or that guy. I wanted to know what caused various emotions to ripple across their faces when they thought they were alone. An average young boy would not see or know what they were feeling, but I thought I did. Being a totally invisible observer did not prevent me from sharing their pain or happiness. I wanted to be a ghost and touch their hearts. These were the high dreams for a future time when I could mature into a man who could live up to their desires. The Village and I were slowly evolving together.

The Cottage in The Village

As a child, I never knew the details of the family finances. Somehow it did not seem to matter. We always had enough money to do whatever we wanted to do. Of course this was a child's view of life, and I was not very demanding. From my young viewpoint, our family was defined by having Grandma and Grandpa living with us. This just seemed so normal. In 1955 when one of Grandpa's sisters died leaving him some stocks, paintings, oriental rugs, and a sum of money, I was curious why this had such an effect on him. The process of settling her estate was a bit bothersome. Dividing the belongings of her life just felt creepy to me. This death triggered an earlier memory that I had not really fully processed at four years of age. Mom took me to a law office, for her to sign some papers. As a four year old, I did lots of things with Mom without understanding what was happening. From the lawyer office, we drove to pick up Coe from her Greyhound Bus job in downtown Detroit since we were in the area. On the ride home, I became aware of a heightened state of interest Coe had in something called a will. I was busy playing with my "little people" lost in my own imaginary world, but I tried to follow their conversation. A will seemed to determine who gets what after he or she dies.

I was horrified at the idea that Coe seemed so happy about what she could “get” while confronted with the unthinkable idea of Mom or Dad’s death. Mom must have felt my pain, but misunderstood my concern. My concern was not about an inheritance, but rather about the emotion of human loss. After arriving home, she took me to one side and tried to assure me she was watching out for my best interests. I hardly heard her talk. The idea of “loss” was just too much. It was as if a floodgate of pain had just opened up and came rushing in. We were all going to die, and there was nothing any of us could do about it.

That day I learned no one was safe anywhere or at any time. Time had pushed these concerns away until this settling of Grandpa’s sister’s estate. It just seemed wrong the idea of creating to destroy. This entire flashback just added to my sinicism about family relationships and life in general. Even in my family the seeds of isolation had now been sown.

Grandpa and Grandma enjoying their new view. I am sitting in the foreground with my dog Elsa.



The Near Future

By 1958 we were renting Dunelawn's studio apartment for more than a month each summer, and the rent was going up. The idea of Grandpa and Grandma buying a cottage in Village came as a welcome surprise to me. The process of looking at houses began that summer. I had no say in the matter, but I was dragged along anyway. As the realtor said, "Many of the houses are mighty disappointing on the inside." Grandpa understood the demand for summer homes was currently low. After World War II, a family's main focus was buying a primary home.

Over the next ten years budgeting for the baby boom also took priority. Grandpa was very savvy, and he said to me, "Just wait until the population bubble hits the vacation market." The Yankee realtor agreed any of these houses would be a smart investment. After all, "God is not making any new coastline soon around here." There were great ocean view cottages listing from a high of \$20,000.00 to a low of \$11,000.00. They settled on a two- bedroom charcoal blue-shingled cottage on Juniper Lane located at the far southern part of town. The cottage was a long walk from the beach, but it was in the quaint Cove area. The town center was less than two miles away. This was walk-able and bike-able. However the payoff was the incredible views north along the coast. In one direction you could see the entire village in a single glance including, The Cove, The Marginal Way, and the famous beach. From the cottage, there was a path through the front yard descending down the cliffs passing The Museum of Fine Art. The path ended at a small stone beach called Narrow Cove. If Heaven could have a Heaven this had to be the place! It was a financial reach, but they were able to buy the cottage for \$14,500.00 with Grandpa's inheritance and a mortgage from Biddeford Savings. My Grandparent's plan was for this to be their home from April to mid-October. We would join them for the end of June, all of July and August. Even though school started the day after the Labor Day Weekend, we stayed an additional day.

Who cared if I missed a day? It was well worth it. The summer of 1959 was spent fixing the cottage. Handmade pine furniture was custom ordered from a carpenter who lived in Arundel, Maine. Our purchase included a rocking chair, a harvest styled dining table and six ladder-back chairs, side tables and a small storage chest to go next to Grandpa's new swivel chair. After fifty-five years, I still use them daily. When Grandpa sat in his swivel chair, he had a commanding view of the living room, the lane and the sweeping ocean. He was like a captain on his bridge. We even had an American flag flying on a twenty-foot tall flagpole attached to the front house peak. God bless America! Life was so good.

Mr. Sydney Bush was our neighbor on the ocean side. Fortunately, we were up high enough to look over his house to see the Kennebunk coastline. He sold expensive ladies undergarments in New York City, but he came across as a used car salesman. However that first summer he was a "Greek bearing gifts." He had an old wooden rowboat with a big "V" shaped cut in the bottom. He wondered if I would be interested in owning it and fixing it up. You would have thought I was being given a big beautiful yacht. I now had a bike and a slightly damaged rowboat. It was playtime. The Cove was a short walk over the footbridge, and I could tie up to the dock for free. I called the boat The Sieve because I could never quite fix the leak. Officially the boats style was a punt, but that took too much explaining so just plain rowboat worked for me. Thanks to Mr. Bush, I was free to explore the rocky coast from both land and sea. I rowed, ran on the rocks, rowed again, and climbed every cliff I could find. I rowed for miles all summer. I was a long way from the dark allies of Detroit. The Village "allies" of inlets and rocky paths presented different adventuresome dangers.



[This is the view from the side yard. From bottom to top is most of The Village coastline including part of Narrow Cove, the harbor of The Cove and the Island House, Oarweed Cove, The Marginal Way and The Beach.]



Taking Mom for a row in the “Sieve” from Narrow Cove.

The Neighbors

By the end of first summer we were settled in our new cottage on the ocean. Neighbors were curious about us as well. Next-door Lloyd Silvernail, an older divorcee stockbroker, lived with his first wife's eighty-year old aunt. We did not think it was a good idea to ask any questions about their relationship. However as it turned out, Lloyd had taken a small fortune and turned it into a large fortune for her. Grace, his whatever, had no one but Lloyd. So he was going to be her only beneficiary. Stranger relationships have been created for less. Lloyd worked in Boston during the week and came up on Fridays. Grace would stay all summer and swim everyday in Narrow Cove. My sister helped Mom start a garden in what was our sunken front lawn. Everyday Grace made her way down the rocks through our garden, across our lawn and passing some small trees leading to Narrow Cove's path. Since this was a seventy-foot drop from top to sea level, it could not have been easy for Grace at her age. One day Grace fell in our garden, but luckily Coe was there to help her. However Coe saw more than she wanted. Grace always wore the same old blue-skirted bathing suit, and the bottom had worn through completely.

Coe was in shock from seeing too much of Grace. This did not stop Grace. She just kept going down for her swim as the blood from a cut ran down her leg. She never did buy a new bathing suit. This old bathing suit lasted for the rest her life. In spite of their eccentricities, we liked the crazy couple.

The Kochs lived on the far side of Lloyd and Grace. He was an architect building "German modern box" style deckhouses in the area. He designed the house they lived in. They named it The Flying Bridge. It had an almost flat roof with three walls of glass and was decorated with 50s modern style furniture. I did not think it looked very New England- ish. He had received attention in the area after designing and overseeing construction of Henry Strater's Museum of Fine Art. The location was what made the museum.

It was our neighbor to our northwest, but it was about forty-feet lower in a small valley. Mrs. K. was a local artist and kept to herself while painting in the open air. She and Grandma talked over the fence on a regular basis.

Henry Strater was not really a neighbor, but he was at the museum everyday. He had one heck of a reputation as a womanizer. He married and divorced a number of times with children piling up from wife to wife. He had painted in Paris with the greats, but locally he was only a legend with his own museum. Being a smart philanthropist he also collected local artists' paintings and sculptures. He had a very good collection. As I matured, I found art to be much more interesting; and I visited the museum often. Maggie Strater, Henry's first wife, lived near the foot of Juniper Lane in a good size mansion on a large track of land. As the story goes, she got word of Henry being in bed with a model in his small studio overhanging The Cove. Not being much of a shrinking violet, she had had it with Henry's affairs. She got in her big black Cadillac and drove down to the cove. There was a straight shot through the parking lot to the studio and Maggie floored it. She hit the studio with such force it knocked the studio off its foundation, over the edge of the cove and into the water. Studio, Henry and model all went flying. There was a divorce, and she kept the house. Wow! This end of town was interesting.

Looking directly from my window and over the museum I had a clear shot of a deckhouse with a flat roof. The house would have been fine, but it was painted some unusual shade of purple. This was the house of David and India W. They were the son and daughter-in-law of the famous artist Charles W. Charles W. and Hamilton Easterfield, the publisher of Art Magazine, created what was known as The School of Art. From their contentious relationship one school developed with two different attitudes. By the 1960s they were long dead. Even though they had passed on, David and India W. still kept their influence alive in the artistic community. However they were the neighbors to watch.

Despite being elderly, they were very energetic and very outspoken with forceful opinions on everything and everyone. They also were members of The John Birch Society and tried to recruit the entire neighborhood. The John Birch Society was an extreme rightwing political group. Lloyd Silvernail said in the early 1950s, The Village wanted to build a town hall on the edge of the village; but this idea was defeated with the help of David and India. Their argument was, "With those damn Russians just over the horizon and ready to invade, why build a facility for them to take over and use as a command center?" My family tried to be polite, but we tried to avoid the nuts that seemed to be everywhere. In the off-season when Grandma and Grandpa were alone, their visits were actually welcomed.

I spent many hours down on the rocks at Narrow Cove. Locals would use the area to swim, sunbathe or just look out at the sea. Only small local groups of people would be using the rocks for pleasure. Older people preferred just to meditate and relax. For the kids, it was their swimming hole and a place to have fun. This is where I met old Captain Adams. At first glance, I thought someone was shooting a movie. He looked like he was in costume portraying a pirate character. When he spoke to me with his deep whisky voice, I was a little unsure of establishing contact. I thought he would have more in common with Grandpa than with me.

However he liked talking about his memories of The Village, and I listened with utmost interest. I learned he really was a sea captain of his own schooner. He moored it in what is now called Perkins Cove's Outer Harbor. He was born in the Island House on the opposite side of the cove. This was before the island was connected to the mainland to establish The Cove. He now lived in a small white Cape Cod style house just a short walk up the valley. His house was much older than he was. I guessed he was in his eighties, but he could have been in his nineties. This would have put him in the right time period to be one of the last sea captains who used schooners to haul firewood from The Village to Boston.

Fishing and lumbering had declined as an industry. This was the start of a new art colony, besides real estate was cheaper in those days.

Tourism started shortly after the artists came to town. Hotels were staffed with young and gay people. Some were really “Gay” and artistic themselves. Captain Adams saw it all evolve in real time. Listening to him was better than any history classroom. The topper was he really was a descendant of the founding father President John Adams.

The Village was a place to explore for more than her beauty, and I encounter unexpected adventures everywhere.

Jumping out of the timeline, Captain Adams died sometime in the 1960s and his grandchildren continued to live in the old Cape on Shore Road for a while. I really did not know them very well. However in the late summer of 1969, I met his newly born great granddaughter Melissa. Her mother carried her down the valley to the sea. We talked about my conversations with Captain Adams, and she let me hold her baby. Ironically eighteen years later, Missy was the person who cut my hair; and she has been the only person cutting my hair for the last twenty-five years. We have grown very close. She is like a daughter to me. Interesting connections can grow from anywhere.

The Visit

Spring of 1961 held hope for another great summer. We were all at the cottage, except Dad. Somehow he always had to work. Coe and two-year old Scott added to the four of us. The house was now crowded. We definitely had a need for more bedrooms. Grandma and Grandpa thought of expanding upstairs with a dormer. The project if it could be done would occur over the winter. By the summer of 1962, the expanded cottage would have five bedrooms and two-baths.

Another occurrence in the summer of 1961 was when the phone rang. We were all caught off guard.

It was Tom Davis, Coe's ex-husband. This was not a good surprise. We had stood up for him at the hearing, and he was grateful. However now he wanted to see Scott. It did not seem like a good idea, but how could you say no to a man wanting to see his son? Now there was absolutely no room in the inn. Mom told him she would call around and find a room for him for a week. That was fine with him. He was on a "mission", and he could only spare a week.

After he hung up, we looked at each other and collectively said, "Mission?" This was the only preparation we had for what was to follow. When his cab arrived, we were in shock. He was as brown skinned as a Mexican and sported a Spanish style thin mustache and chin hair. He was no longer blond. Dark brown hair drastically changed his appearance. He was dressed head to toe in some kind of foreign military uniform. His story was stranger still. He claimed to have been recruited by "the organization" (CIA), given a new identity (Brigadier-General...some kind of Spanish name) and ran guns to Castro in Cuba. This all seemed too crazy, but yet we did not totally dismiss him. The total package was beyond his ability to create just for our benefit. He was completely transformed and looked believable. Even his accent was right. This was way too much of a transformation just to say it was Tom being crazy.

He stayed at a local rooming house with a porch filled with bored old ladies. He was able to make the short walk to Juniper Lane to visit Scott and Coe. For a week, he dined with us and told stories right on the edge of being believable. However we could not forget what had happened only a few years earlier. He had changed somehow, and he could not be trusted. At the end of the week, Mom called a cab to pick him up at the rooming house.

As we waved good-bye, the entire porch of old ladies looked as if they were saying good-bye to an old lover. He was a conman when it came to women. Even Coe looked conflicted about his leaving.

However true to form, Tom left a trail of bad checks; and Mom reluctantly paid them. We hoped that was the end of Tom, but it was not. Fourteen years later his death raised some big questions. That story will be told later.

Moving To White Detroit

Welcome to Hell,

After our move to the northwest corner of Detroit, I was marched into my new homeroom at Vetal Junior High School by the principal. He introduced me as "...little Chip Cook and do try to make him your new friend." He might as well have drawn a red and white target on my back and handed out bows with arrows. I was a dead man before I opened my mouth.

In the inner city, learning problems were normal; and I blended in just fine. However Vetal was different. You were placed on a scale and judged by grades. Test results were read out loud from the highest grade to the lowest grade. Since I was always the last name read off, this added fuel to the fire of confrontation. I ran a gauntlet everyday after school. Fortunately the school bullies were not yet very motivated and totally unorganized.

Developing any kind of friendship was impossible. At best I was invisible to the girls and a growing target to the boys. Even the teachers bought into the lies that I was a troublemaker from the inner city. Something was going to explode, and it took only six weeks. One day trying not to be too late for class, I was at my locker when I felt a sharp pain in my ass.

I spun around and grabbed the guy standing behind me. I drew my fist back to punch him in the face. I had caught him off guard and was going to land a punch on his ugly nose. At that very second, the principal screamed out, "Stop!" I did. This was all the proof he needed to label me as a major problem needing punishment.

This required Mom to be at her best and come to my rescue. Even though a doctor's report saying a hatpin or something like it had been used to stab me in the "rear", we could not change the principal's opinion towards me.

In Mom's eyes the system had failed, and she was right. The administration believed I was troubled, and I would never graduate from a high school. College would be totally out of the picture. I knew my situation was grim, and I did not see a way out. When I asked Mom why she looked so worried, she said, "Today, I can read to you, but I will not always be around. What will you do then?" A voice way down deep said, "Don't worry. If I cannot do something, I will hire someone to do it." Don't ask me where this power of certainty came from. It was nothing I had thought up. It just came out of my mouth at the time. In the outside world danger came in many forms. In my mind, I felt ill equipped to handle my problems. On the other hand, a strength of certainty of me being successful was somewhere in me too. It started manifesting in me as a tenacious personality trait.

I was motivated to prove them wrong. The perception of me being dumb was not sexy. In my mind success, power and sex were all connected; and an education with high grades seemed to me to be the first step. This would prove to Mom my confidence was correct, and she did not have to worry. The remaining question was how would this happen? The answer was only a day away.

Mom knew many people in Detroit, and Charlie Wolf was one of them. He was a superintendent on the Detroit Public School System's Board of Education, and he was interested in helping.

His advice was to remove me from the public school system completely and enroll me in Mrs. O'Connor's Reading Clinic in Birmingham, Michigan. Depending on my performance, I would enroll into a different junior high school when I was ready. This would be a clean start.

Mom was a firm believer in taking advantage of opportunities. She called them “luck lines”, and she saw this as being one. The cost would be high in time and money. It was my job to minimize the expense to the family.

I gave my word that I would try my best. After all, what choice did I have? I would either sink or swim.

Climbing To Purgatory

As we made the hour plus drive to the reading clinic, some of my family’s hardships became apparent on the very first day. The clinic, an old Victorian Mansion, was located in a very busy semi-commercial area. The house had seen better times. We entered an office, and we were glared at by an ugly mean looking lady. From a back office emerged a very confident white haired lady in glasses with a knowing smile. I assumed correctly. This was Mrs.O’Connor. She and Mom talked as if I was not there. For my part, I tried to appear interested. She explained the morning sessions lasted from 8:00 to noon and were not very busy at this moment.

In what must have been the living room, sixteen very big boxes were filled with large cards. They ran the length of the room along one wall. In front of an old stone fireplace, tables and chairs arranged banquet style. She pulled out a selection of cards and placed them out for viewing. These were reading cards. Each box approximately represents a different grade level one through twelve. Four of the boxes contained college level refresher courses for students needing additional help. In each box, there were different subjects paralleling the selections of classes offered in a typical school system.

Mrs. O’Connor explained, “Each plastic card has a reading side and a backside with ten questions. Your job Chip is to read one side and answer all ten questions correctly. You will self- grade your work using a master key.

You must reread the paragraphs and take the exam again until you get all ten questions correct. Do you have any questions?"

In a worried tone I asked, "How many cards are there?" "Between 500 to 800 cards per box, but don't let that bother you. You get to work at your own pace." She smiled in an unsettling way. I was screwed! I would be spending the rest of my life in plastic card purgatory. Before I had time to panic, the voice from within said, "One card at a time." My mind shouted back, "Easy for you to say!"

Mom left me with a bagged lunch and bus money. The two- hour return bus ride was south on Woodward Ave. from Birmingham to downtown Detroit. I then had to transfer to Grand River Ave., and I finished with a long ride to Rosedale Park. This seemed to be my life, but it only got worst. The ugly office lady actually turned out to be a teacher. As soon as Mom left, my teacher pulled a very strange acting boy named Markie from another room. He had some sort of educational problem. Markie was from a very wealthy family who did not want to deal with his problems. Therefore he was passed off to Mrs. O'Connor's Clinic. I felt badly for him. He could not even communicate. He would just smile and rock himself back and forth singing something to himself. Our ugly and mean teacher and Markie took on a grotesque image in my imagination of a witch and her slave. If I were ever to get out of this hole, the motivation was right in front of me. My experience with Vetal Junior High and this clinic just increased my feelings of isolation, desperation and loneliness.

My focus had to adapt in order to survive reading all those cards. I had to learn to view this exercise as interesting. The solution was to imagine the cards contained information as interesting as the information my Grandpa taught me. I was becoming an "info-maniac." Whatever neural wiring problems my brain had, repetition seemed to drive changes in the brain like muscle development. It is called plasticity. The more you use your brain the more neural connections your brain makes. The road out of the clinic was through those damn plastic cards.

Is it Heaven Yet?

It took almost a year to complete Mrs. O'Connor's program, but I did it! Now I could be enrolled in the Detroit school system. Cadillac Junior High was my new school. Although it was quite a drive, it was worth it. In my first semester, my grades improved from "D's" and "E's" to "A's" and "B's". The second semester grades were mostly "A's." However this came at a great cost. I had to study most of the time.

Since I had no neighborhood friends and no social life, it did not matter. I lived for the summers in Maine and worked like a slave the rest of the time. My major problem was making and keeping friends. Girls showed no interest in me and they kept to themselves. In general the girls seemed indifferent to most guys. Pretending guys did not exist and keeping their knees together were major concerns since skirts were getting shorter and most guys spent at least half their time trying to sneak a peek between their legs.

Most guys bored me, and I felt a zero connection with them. Having experienced daily schoolyard physical confrontation at Vetat Junior High, I now could academically compete. The scorecard was my report card with A's, and now I had more than a fighting chance.

Despite my problems, my Dad had his own bigger problems. Buying a new house in Rosedale Park, paying for Mrs. O'Connor's Clinic and having a potential business partnership sabotaged caused great stress. Fortunately, one of Mom's "luck lines" came through for us. Mom overheard Mr. Hill, the owner of C. R. Hill Company, complained about business being too good; and he wanted to retire. C. R. Hill Co. supplied professional jewelry makers, schools and hobbyist with what they needed. Mom was picking up supplies for Dad's classes when she overheard Mr. Hill.

In a very short period of time, Dad got a partner and bought the business for sixty thousand dollars.

This was a life or death deal for the family, but I didn't think Dad let us know just how important it was to succeed. Even though I worked for him on Saturdays doing little jobs, I don't think Dad's partner liked having a kid around. I did not make much. The point was for me to help him out.

Summer vacation was "the carrot on the end of the stick." I had learned how to surf from the lifeguards, and I enjoyed looking through surfboard catalogues. I found a nice board for only seventy-dollars, and I had the money. I bought it with a Maine delivery for next summer. I kept that dream of surfing in Maine in my head and worked as hard as I could.

A Passion to Sail

"Dancing with the wind..." described what I saw in The Cove as I walked over the footbridge.

Without a sound and just missing each other by inches, two small sailboats tacked into the wind crisscrossing each other. I fell in love with the beauty of this flowing motion. Even though I had seen hundreds of sailboats before, what I saw or more accurately felt was playful freedom and happiness that afternoon. I wanted it. No! I desired it. It was not a matter of "if", but a matter of "when" and "how" would I buy a sailboat? My Mom's response was, "Fine! I'd love to go sailing. You better start saving your pennies."

From the age of five, I had worked extra chores around the house to buy the things I wanted. When I was big enough, I expanded my jobs to cutting lawns and shoveling snow for the neighbors. I saved half of my earnings; and last year, I was able to buy a seventy-dollar surfboard. This left me with hundreds to spare in savings. Until I could get a real job, a sailboat would probably be out of reach; but you have to start somewhere. I still had plenty of time to dream.

For now, my rowboat and my new surfboard would be enough to keep me busy. In Maine I played by myself on the rocks. One of my favorite games was based on the book "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea." At the end of the story, the Nautilus submarine was under fire from the world's great navel powers. My game duplicated the battle by using a piece of driftwood, and pelting it with beach stones. The fight end when the Nautilus broke into two pieces.

Despite my isolation and loneliness, I never tired of the game.

It was around this time that a neighbor's strange relative, a Mrs. Flynn, moved in for the summer. She had one of those personalities that just took over. We tried not to interact with her but it was no use. In no time, she had me meeting another new kid in the neighborhood.

Mr. Bill G. had just arrived for the summer with three sisters. Their names were Betty, Ruthie and little Jeannie. Mrs. Flynn wanted us to meet, and we did. We both thought she was so eccentric that we were friends from our first laughs. For the first time in years, I had a friend to talk with; and like me, he too was a bit of an info-maniac.

His family had just inherited the old gray house on Shore Road from a distant aunt. He welcomed the opportunity to escape a house full of girls. My feelings were just the reverse of his. He and I enjoyed fun times with my rowboat and surfboard. His sisters were the first girls who treated me like a friend. Thank you Mrs. Flynn! For years we had many memorable adventures together.

The Great Cove Fish Fight

By the summer of 1962, Bill and I each had a rowboat; and we used them often. As mentioned before, my first rowboat The Sieve kept sinking. This required a bailer and three hands and a new plastic rowboat for rescue. Ironically "The Sieve" out lasted the new plastic rowboat, which cracked in 1969. Finally in 1970, I gave The Sieve and three bailers away to a deserving kid and wished him good luck.

Back to 1962, sometimes we would row from The Cove to the bell buoy and back. This totaled two miles. We went out in fog and in storms when other boats were being tied together to protect them from the wind. I loved going out late at night to see the minute organisms light up from our oars splashing in the water. We learned to maneuver narrow and dangerous passages between the rocks. Sometimes we would even row three miles to the beach. However once we rowed to the bell buoy, then turned south and rowed another three miles to Bald Head Cliff and finally two miles back to The Cove, our hands were bleeding from the eight miles ordeal. It was difficult to define the line between brave and stupid at the age of thirteen. Most of the things we did our parents would not find out about until weeks or even years after the fact. It was better that way. It kept everyone happy. Life was good, but life was going to get a little out of control by mid-July.

Bill and I had taken the boats to Narrow Cove. We used them as a platform to swim and also to see if we capsized the boats how hard it would be to right them. We thought this was all part of water safety. By three o'clock, we were done for the day and started rowing back to The Cove. As we approached the first dock, I could see Ruthie, Bill's sister, drop-line fishing with three other girls. They had their hair up in large curlers covered with scarves. I asked Bill what the occasion was. He said it was Ruthie's Birthday, and she had some friends up to visit. Trying to be friendly I yelled, "Happy Birthday!" It was as if we were not there. They ignored us completely. What was this odd behavior? Was this "a sister thing"? Not wanting to be ignored, Bill and I just parked our rowboats right off the dock and started talking to them. Ruthie was mad; and at some point, she picked up an old bailer and tried to splash us. Bill and I had learned how to use the oars to really make a directed splash. The girls did not have a chance, and their feet got wet. It should have stopped at that, but it did not. Their screams were drawing a crowd of on-lookers. Some people began taking pictures, and one man even took a movie of our frolicking.

The girls got buckets, and the water fight was on. Water flew everywhere, and curlers were floating in the cove. Wet hair was everywhere. Then it went from bad to worse. I guess the girls had been fishing for something other than fish. Some guys showed up to help them, but they were not sure they wanted to get wet. On the backside of the dock were bait barrels. These bait barrels contained discarded fish creating an unbelievable stench. From one of the barrels, someone found a twenty-inch slimy projectile and hurled it at Bill. It landed on his back and head.

Now the real war started. More fish came from many directions. The rotten fish floated so we could retrieve and retaliate. One guy got creative, and he started throwing fish down on us from the footbridge. He needed to be taught a lesson, and Bill and I were going to deliver it. We tied the boats to the bridge and climbed straight up the structure.

He was going to be thrown off the bridge, and he knew it. He made the right decision and ran. We never saw him again. Meanwhile the girls were out of control and incapable of forming a real sentence. We tried to dodge the girls' slaps. As we moved the rowboats behind the float, we realized the battle was not over. We had to use the oars as protection as we ran over the footbridge and up Woodbury Lane to the safety of Bill's house. They were like a swarm of bees on our heels. Since Mr. and Mrs. G. were still out shopping for Ruthie's party, the house did not afford much protection. Someone started spraying us with the garden hose, and another battle for the hose ensued. Finally poor Bill got control of the hose as two girls with handfuls of peanut butter ganged up on him from the rear. It was not a pretty sight. When he spun around with the hose and took it into the kitchen, I knew it was time to go home. Just then the G.'s came home, and I was out of there in a flash. This was not the introduction to Ruthie's friends I had wished. In fact, it guaranteed an "us and them" kind of relationship for the rest of her life. They were grounded for a week. I got away scott-free. I was lucky once again.

Over the years, Bill had seen nude girls; but they were his sisters. I said it was better than silhouettes and magazines, but he did not think it was very sexy. Thinking about it from his side, I guess it was a good thing he did not think it was sexy, however my luck was about to change. My sister invited her friend Judy to come and visit for a month. The cottage was small and putting seven people in it made for some interesting mishaps. Let's just say I damn near passed out on a few occasions as Judy paraded around without a towel. She did not think a thing about it. Evidently she did this with her brothers, but I was not her brother.

The Village was a strange place, or should I say, it attracted strange people at times.

In a bright yellow see-through crocheted bikini, one such interesting woman use to strut down to the beach. Bill and I would jokingly say she must have liked her bikini well ventilated. She did not care what people thought and the rumor mill worked overtime. One day as Bill and I were running through the dunes and were in an area that had some privacy, as we came over the ridge of the largest dune, there she was without her yellow bikini. She was totally naked! We must have been quiet because she just stayed there really nude! I mean with no hair visible between her legs! We dropped to our knees and worshipped her beauty. Not wanting to be discovered, we retraced our steps and went into the cold water to settle down.

Wow! What a summer this was becoming. I had seen "the promised land" and I wanted to explore it. Oddly the memory of Suzy's slap came back to me. I was beginning to understand my introduction to sexuality could be dangerous and it had to be handled with great care. Fish fights were fun, but they were not going to get me laid.

Setting the stage

My surfboard was also a source of meeting people. Bill and I met John that way. He was older and the son of a minister. He worked at The Playhouse, and said he could get us jobs for the next year. At \$12.50 per week the pay was minimal; but the job had some outstanding perks. These were namely the usherettes. "Where do I sign up?" I asked. This was a perfect way to meet the The Village working girls of my dreams, see free plays and add to my sailboat fund. Mom's "luck lines" may not be just a superstition after all.

Towards the end of the summer a movie was opening in theatres called Dr. No. It had an unusual title with an even more unusual hero, named James Bond or "007". Even though it was rated "R", Mom let me see it because she wanted to see it.

We saw it in The Square Theatre. Ironically, seven years later we would own the theatre. Since the author Ian Flemming was one of President John F. Kennedy's favorites, it was guaranteed to be a success. In fact when Joseph Stalin of Russia toured Hollywood in the late 1920s he was quoted as saying, "I could control the world if I had a Hollywood." Such was the power and influence of movies; but at the time, I could not appreciate this fact. The message was not subtle, women melted into the arms of a man who was as emotionally deep as his ashtray. He was a handsome killing machine who drank, smoked, gambled and had sex with any woman he wanted. In other words, he was a total "bad boy". He broke all norms of conduct and yet he was held up as an ideal man. The women on and off the screen went crazy for him. What kind of message did this send to a kid trying to understand what women wanted in a relationship? It was confusing to say the least.

In hindsight, I can understand the role of fantasy vs. reality today. This was not clear to me then. Generally women desired the "bad boy" type, because of the thrill of the unknown; but if they were smart, they would marry someone like "dear old dad".

He was a known reliable character; but the “bad boy” was unpredictable, wild and dangerous. These adjectives described the conflicting desires woman have always had. If dad was also a “bad boy”, then woman had a compounded problem. This drama had been played out in my own family. Tom and Coe’s marriage and divorce was our prime example. He was beyond a “bad boy”. He was just like a nutty candy bar in a great big cellophane wrapper.

This short history sets the foundation for “My learning to Sail.” My summers in the Maine vacationland introduced me to worldly freedoms and explorations. For better or for worse, my sexual development was beginning to make itself known, but it would have to wait another year to really bloom.



At the age of thirteen, I loved surfing.

My Sailboat and the summer of 1963

It was the middle of February 1963 as very cold wind blew in the doors at the Detroit Boat Show. A white fiberglass sailboat with its sails hosted up its mast was just sitting on the floor at the entrance. I was just there to look and dream, but this fourteen-foot Pintail #50 was mesmerizing. In my imagination, I could “feel” it in action. My mind said, “Not time yet. You need to earn more money to pay for it. Buying the boat would be just the start of the expenses of ownership.”

However other things were going on in my mind at the same time. Even though I had never sailed before, I could imagine me sailing on the open sea. The tilt of the boat, the wind pushing on the sails and the pull of the rudder in my hands, was the dream of my dancing with the wind as I sailed. The salesman had a job to do, and he knew how to push my “buttons”. “For \$895.00, this floor model with a canvas boom cover would be a savings of \$250.00 over this summer’s price. It is a very good deal.” I was thinking fast, but I knew I could not make the final decision. The next offer was for a free lesson to seal the deal. “What about transporting the sailboat to Maine?” I asked. I got a blank stare and a pause. He said, “I can sell you a slightly used boat trailer for \$100.00.”

The honeymoon was over. Clearly he was looking for an older customer with cash then having a conversation with a fourteen year old. I said, “Write it up so I can sell it to my partner.” He blinked only once and wrote the sales offer up in his order book. “Oh! Can you write in the free safety vests you have advertised on that card over there too? I need to do some selling of my own tonight.” I asked. “First come, first served or the end of the show,” he said not looking very happy. “Thank you!” I said, and started looking for Mom. We had some business to do at home. I needed to borrow some money for the first time. I would need almost \$400.00. I also had to work out a plan to repay the money with interest.

I shoveled snow that winter and cut lawns that spring and fall. I knew I was going to have a job at The Playhouse in the summer. Any Birthday or Christmas gifts would go directly to reduce my debt. Maybe this could work after all!

It was a successful pitch to my Grandpa and Dad. Now I had to teach myself to sail. Mom did not say anything, but I could tell she was proud of me. I guess they all were. I found books on the subject of sailing and imagined myself physically in the act. The principle of sailing made sense, and I did not lack imagination for the feeling of sailing in my mind. However I knew the act, the dance, was all together something different. Sometimes unexpected things just happen, and you need to be able to react in a second without thinking of what you are doing. I had read this skill is learned by practice, practice, and more practice.

Finally the day had come to drive out to Anchor Boat Sales in Mt. Clements to get my first sailing lesson. Instead of a real lesson, the yard boy put my boat into Anchor River flowing into Lake St. Clair. From what I had learned and his skill, the two of us were able to rig the sailboat. He sailed back and forth on the 200- foot wide river, and then he had me sail back and forth twice. To my surprise, the lesson was over. As he got out, Dad got in the boat. It was a good thing I did not know how notorious Dad had been during World War II for his lack of abilities when it came to handling small boats. Later I learned his men had called him Captain Crunch. He had been a supply officer, and this required no knowledge of sailing.

We sailed back and forth zigzagging as we practiced. The river was basically an access route from marinas and Lake St. Clair. Sailboats under power and speedboats formed lines in both directions like a lines of worker ants. We were trying not to hit anyone. I have to admit I was very nervous, and sailing did not seem at all like I had imagined it. However Dad was impressed with my faking it. We tacked down the river towards the lake. We sailed into the wind. If we had any problems, we could “run” back to Anchor’s dock.

We sailed for two hours, and that was just about all my nerves could take. It was like being in a shooting gallery. Since we did not hit anyone or damage the sailboat, Dad thought it was a successful day.

Friends of Mom and Dad offered to let us moor my boat at the Grosse Point Yacht Club until we were ready to drive it to Maine. I had three more chances to gain some experience on Lake St. Clair. It would have been easier if I had an outboard motor. Since I had spent all my money, a motor was out of the question. As it turned out, it was a great test of my ability “to thread the needle.” The yacht club was very tight on space, and I was forced to be very careful.

One strange sailing event was pure physics. On my last sail just off the entrance to the yacht basin, conditions were just right with wind speed, duration, shallow lake and wave action to create a phenomenon called standing waves. When you think of waves, usually one thinks of a chain of waves moving until they hit a shore. Standing waves are created when incoming waves reinforce outgoing waves. They resonate like when you blow over the top of a bottle. On the lake, this took the form of a surface divided into a pattern of evenly spaced peaks and holes. The peaks were about a foot high, and the holes were about a foot deep. The distance between peaks and holes was about eight feet. With regularity, the peaks became holes; and the holes became peaks.

In my books on sailing, nothing was said about sailing in these conditions. The oscillations acted effectively like breaks. It was very slow returning to the basin. This was a very good learning lesson for me. Don't panic! I was gaining confidence, and that was important.

The trip to Maine had all the normal ups and downs. However hauling a boat trailer increased the 13-hour drive to 20- hours. The six cats and one dog just added to the fun and games of the trip. The cool June salt-air came as a welcome relief as we drove over the bridge from Portsmouth into Maine. We were home. Bill and family had not come up from Chelmsford, Massachusetts yet.

Boy! Was he going to be surprised with the new toy. Before even buying the sailboat, I had called the The Village Office and inquired as to the availability of moorings. It was not going to be a problem, and the fee was only \$12.50 per year. It was a green light to go ahead and put the Spindrift in the water at the beach, and sail it around to the cove.

A day before the launch, I surveyed the route I was going to sail. One big problem was getting under the bridge at the beach. I needed an out going tide to float the sailboat without a mast under the bridge. Once on the other side, I would have to raise the mast and rig the boom and sails. The next challenge was trying to sail through the waves breaking into the river. All this work had to be done by only me. There was not a lot of time to spare. The day was beautiful, and the dance went off perfectly. The boat and I moved gracefully. Planning ahead was of great importance, and another vital lesson learned.

Being the new guy, in the cove with a small boat, put me on the bottom of the pecking order. I was assigned a horrible mooring at the opposite side of the cove. This was right under an open drainpipe from The Riverside Motel. I was not going to complain. I did not know the unwritten rules of any game the locals wanted to play. I could feel the eyes, and my job was to fit in and blend. There she was anchored with her boom tent up to keep out the rain. I used my green Sieve to get me back and forth from the dock. I was a sailor with a world to explore. As I would expect from a New England Yankee, Bill's reaction was guarded. However his interest was obvious. It did not take him long to get the hang of sailing. However a very nervous Mr. and Mrs. G. made the offer to buy a new outboard motor since most of their children were going out sailing on my boat. I guess they rationalized it as good insurance.

We sailed every day in good or bad weather. The learning curve was steep. Bill and I felt our parents did not need to know too much about the near misses.

We were only thinking about them. I took Mom out only on good days. When Dad came to Maine for his one or two week vacation, I did not have the time to be selective. Dad had some weight to him, and I placed him up by the mast. This would be easier for him and it would also balance the boat. Some excursions did get a little exciting, and he was glad to make it back to The Cove alive. However he usually complained about me giving him a wet ass more than anything else. It became a family joke; but depending on the wind direction it was very true!



Mom blessing the new surfboard - 1961

The Playhouse

My surfboard purchase led me to meeting John F. This opened the door for many opportunities. One such opportunity was my first job at The Playhouse. The good luck did not end there. In addition, my luck continued with my developing a special friendship with the head lifeguard Mr. Russell Hughes at the beach. He allowed me to store my large surfboard at the lifeguard station. It was a blessing not to have to drag the board back and forth from my house at The Cove.

My mother always said, “You create your own ‘luck lines’.” I was dubious of this kind of connecting the facts to draw a possible conclusion about something called “luck lines.” No matter what direction my path had taken, I could have marveled at the uniqueness of the interwoven steps. Even at the age of fourteen, I was thinking logically and becoming blind to more imaginative possibilities. An idea like a “luck line” seemed too much like getting involved with the architecture of anyone’s destiny. My mother belonged to the Congregationalist Church.

Even though I was still a youngster, I made the conscious decision to separate from the church and any religious beliefs. Of all the religions to practice, the Congregationalist had the least religious structure. I was not fully aware of what transformations were taking place in my own thought processes. I was becoming an Agnostic without knowing it. Ironically, “Reason contents me” was a motto from one of our family’s coats-of-arms. Although a scientific mindset was being formed without my awareness, I felt content with reason being my faith. Though difficult to dismiss, the idea of luck was just another old notion, I thought. My summer of 1963 was “a dream come true”. I had a surfboard at the beach for my mornings. I had a sailboat in the cove for my afternoons. I had my first real job at the theatre for my evenings. There were girls to meet. My friends, Bill and John, and I were now ready for excitement and adventure.



John and me at the Playhouse in 1963

The Playhouse job was easy. John and I had to direct traffic, and deal with unwilling patrons, who did not want to follow our parking directions. Since the theatre had almost 750 seats, we had to deal with hundreds of cars each night. Once the play started, our duties ended. We would come in to watch the play from the back of the auditorium or hangout in the concession area until intermission. The same choice was given to the teenage usherettes.

Working side by side with teenage girls was a bonus I did not expect. However I was the baby of the group. Most of the girls were entering college or becoming seniors in high school. There were sixteen different girls filling four slots for each of the eight performances, so there was quite a selection. Since everyone needed more money, these girls had second jobs. For me this was the realization of dreams from my childhood at Dunelawn. I looked older than my age, but at least for now, fourteen was just too big an age gap. I observed their relationships. Everything and everyone has a “dance”, and one must learn the moves in order to step in when opportunity strikes. I was a good listener. Even though I was winging it when it came to a deep understanding of their emotional feelings, they felt I was someone they could tell their story to. Besides to them, I was just an ear who would disappear at the end of the summer. However I still tried to be persuasive.

I tried to use a sailboat ride as a ploy for a non-date date, but most girls had no free time to go sailing. This meant they also did not have time for a boyfriend either. I could sense mischief in my future. What popped into my head was the line from Shakespeare’s Hamlet, “The play is the thing!” That line seemed to have many meanings, and I was imagining my part in “playing” with future relationships that first summer.

Half way through the summer, John was needed to work backstage. Not missing a step, I suggested my friend Bill to fill his now empty job.

Bill and I were now looking over the landscape of usherettes and dreaming. There were two sisters Pam and Phyllis from Orlando Florida who rented a room in a house up the street from Bill's house.

When they were not working at the playhouse, they worked at The Whistling Oyster restaurant in the cove. Both girls seemed tired and sad. Bill and I suggested going out after work for a row around the cove. After all, we had two rowboats. The girls had concerns about going out in the darkness, but we reassured them we had been doing it for years. In stead they countered with an offer to play pool in the basement where they rented a room. This sounded like fun to us. The four of us became great friends. Eventually they loved rowing at night. As romantic as this might seem and despite our high hopes, our evenings with the girls remain PG.

Often we would row out to the entrance of the harbor. This was defined by the green can buoy on our right and the red nun buoy on our left. Robin Richards' father owned The Hillcrest Hotel and Robin operated The Sandpiper, a bar with the Robin Hood Room. Since The Village was a "dry" village, The Sandpiper located just over the town line in York, was a very popular hangout. Robin also had access to the family sailboat, The Rorqual. She was a 40-foot two-masted schooner. It was a short walk from the bar to the Cove. We never knew each other, but our paths crossed often in the mouth of the cove.

Every night when we would be out rowing, The Rorqual would just appear like "The Flying Dutchman" ghost ship. It hardly made a sound as it slowly glided into the Cove. We would just stare at it passing by. Its deck was covered with intertwining bodies paying no attention to admiring onlookers. This was a man with a job I would love to have. He created it by the smart use of the resources available to him. Nothing got by me. I was learning.

Before coming to Maine with her sister, Pam told me about braking up with her boyfriend of three years.

She was tired, lonely and had not met anyone to fill the void in her broken heart. I listened to her as a concerned friend. In fact, she became my first real true female friend. We talked about our sorrows and cried together on the rocks of Narrow Cove.

She was leaving the day after Labor Day to start college in Florida. She did not say it, but she had hoped for summer romance. It made sense to me that she wanted to start dreaming again. She desired to see things “new.” Instead she and her sister were hanging out with two fourteen year olds. What a disappointment this must have been to them. By the end of the summer, the girls seemed disinterested in us, but Bill and I understood.

Labor Day Weekend (My First “Dance.”)

Bill and I got the sailboat out of the water and put it away for the winter. Our last working night at the playhouse was on Saturday of Labor Day weekend. Bill and his family left Sunday morning to return home for the beginning of the school year.

My family waited until the holiday traffic was over to leave for Detroit. Since the car was packed, we waited with nothing to do. I now had time to wonder about Pam and Phyllis, and what they were doing.

I wanted to say good-bye, and I wanted to wish Pam best of luck as she started her first semester in college. From our past conversations, I did not expect either girl to return to The Village next summer. To me, their world seemed to be sad and missing something. Or missing someone important.

I knocked on their door at 10:00 o'clock Sunday night. It was a dark foggy night. Pam answered the door and had just finished her packing. Phyllis was helping out at The Whistling Oyster in The Cove. Being the end of the season, the restaurant was short on workers. Pam and I talked for a while, and I said I would like to say good-bye to Phyllis too.

The Oyster was only a half-mile walk down Pine Hill Road. Before we got to the cove's footbridge, our hands joined in the foggy darkness. Forgetting about Phyllis, we turned in the opposite direction and headed towards Narrow Cove and The Museum of American Art.

The fog obscured the floodlight's illumination on the museum. The ground and the rocks were as wet as our hands were sweaty. We found a shadowy nook on the north corner of the building. We did not talk about love. We did not talk at all. We kissed for the first time. That kiss lasted over an hour! I had never French kissed before. In fact this was the first kiss I had ever had outside the family, and family kissing did not count. She unbuttoned her blouse as I unhooked her bra. As her bra flew over a rock, her shirt slipped off her shoulders. I feed on her passion like it was a drug; and from her body, I could tell she was doing the same. I wanted more, and she wanted more. We both were wrestling with our own fears and desires. On a pile of flagstones in the nook, I pulled down her pants and sat her on my jacket. I had seen magazine pictures, and I had read the information. Now was the final exam! I wanted to ace it with 100% satisfaction. Until this moment I felt nothing could top the feeling of sailing, but boy I was wrong. This passionate experience was a pivotal developmental stage for me.

Although I was not keeping track of time, at some point she wanted to take control of the sexual action. Her ravenous hunger was an equal to mine.

Finally totally satisfied and exhausted, we dressed each other slowly and lovingly as if saying good-bye forever. We were not in love, but we sure had a wonderful time. At four o'clock in the morning, I walked her home without a word. As we tightly held each other in the sweet darkness we kissed for the last time. The sweet smell of her wafting into the fog left a lasting impression on me. With a simple "Good-bye", we turned lovingly and departed in separate directions. So I ended my first "Dance." I was learning fast.

Memories of my “first dance”

By the time we left The Village on Monday, Pam and her sister were on a bus to Florida. I was still sleepy from the night before. I wondered to myself if it had been a one-night stand.

Since our romantic encounter was from Sunday night into Monday morning, this was technically a two-day episode. I laughed at the idea some people would have considered it statutory rape. I did not feel violated in the least. It was quite the opposite. I was happy and thankful. I gratefully surrendered my virginity.

Since neither of us were going to tell the truth to anyone, that night of passion was our forbidden secret. She could not tell her friends or even her sister because of our age difference. Since she had sex with a fourteen-year-old, my hope was she would not think of herself as a loser. She was my winner!

As it turned out, we were a few years ahead of our times. “Free-love” would not be in vogue for a few more years. “The pill” was just becoming available. We thought we were being creative to avoid the risk of pregnancy. Little did I know we were not inventing anything new.

Being an info-maniac, I was curious about sexual attitudes; and found a copy of Master and Johnson’s Research into Human Sexuality. Boy! That book was an eye opener. However it seemed a little too clinical compared with what I had experienced. It missed the heart of the act. It seemed that emotionally men and woman were the same in some areas and very different in other areas. I don’t mean the obvious differences. I’m talking about the influence of social attitudes. Men were risk takers; and woman had more at stake, and wanted to avoid risks.

Understandably women would be left with more of the responsibility if they were to get pregnant. Marriage seemed to be society’s cure for this problem.

Although women pretended to object to the romantic chase, they actually enjoyed pursuing their sexual desires before they found love. Once in love and a ring on the finger, then things could get hot behind closed doors. Before the sexual revolution of the late sixties, publicly a woman's sexual desires was viewed as a loss of control. In other words, if a man seduced a woman it was his fault and not hers. Hence, the backseat protest song of "Don't! Stop!" slowly changed to "Don't stop!" When a guy heard the transformation of protest, he knew he had taken control by seduction; and it was not her being cheap or loose. Since he was a master of seduction, she could not help herself.

All this rationalizing seemed like so much bullshit to me. My "first dance" felt natural and pure in so many ways. However if this was the normal mating ritual, who was I to change the rules of the dance? I did not like it, but I processed the information, like learning a new dance step, for future use.

At this point, I would like to step out of my story's timeline to illustrate just how confusing rules defining sexuality could be for a guy. By the end of the sixties, sexual activities were often spontaneous lacking romantic emotions. This mimicked what Pam and I experienced. The playing field for men and women were becoming more equal. If you were in my arms, you were there to play. No need to talk about love or marriage. The two ideas did not have to be connected. All that mattered was the here and now. Older generations muttered, "Why buy a cow when milk was so cheap?" In their eyes, I think they were jealous of the freedom we had.

Later in the seventies sex was trivialized to satisfying an "itch". However by the eighties, one had to be politically correct and ask permission to do the itching. When a girl said no, she really meant no and don't even talk about seduction. Woman now had all the rights that men had previously enjoyed. My problem was I never liked the way most men treated women. The act of a man cherishing the woman he was with seemed to disappear.

Couples buying tickets in my movie theatre illustrated this transformation. Before the 1980s, the man would always pay. During the 1980s and later, often the guy would turn to his date and look at her as if to say, "Well, you pay!" And she would. I cannot tell you how mad this change in attitude made me. In my opinion, men should have been more responsible. Also I objected to women becoming more irresponsible. A simple illustration proves my point. If you have a glass of dirty water and you have a glass of clean water. They are not equal. If equality is the only goal, then mix them together; and they are equally dirty glasses of water. Is this better? Personally, I think the liberalization of America on every level has led to our losing something very important. We have become dirty water.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the creation of the World Wide Web and the worldwide epidemic of AIDS making sex dangerous, created a completely new phenomenon. Although not all women do it, a huge number of women of all ages, are posting pictures of themselves on the Internet in unbelievable naked positions. Hell, one could learn how to do a rectal and a vaginal exam from the same picture. It has created a new industry of butt-hole bleaching to look good for their photos. However, the unintentional consequence seems to center on the misconception that the more men and even women they can arouse, the more desirable they think they are. This results in a false sense of empowerment.

Periodically, I have to check out the Internet just to stay educated about this subculture trend. I am continuously shocked at what I find. I feel like a dinosaur most of the time. My "Forty Dances" is a search for a special relationship I could not find. For me, it was not a game of numbers, or a metric creating the illusion of power. It was just my journey. This part of society seems to be in a race to the bottom. Now go back to the illustration of clean water versus dirty water. "How many drops of dirty water does it take to make the clean water dirty?" I'll leave that as an unanswered question for the reader.

The big problem is the next generation. Remember my excitement when I found my brother-in-law's box of sexy magazines in the attic. The problem today is children are exposed to sexuality with lower and lower boundaries of protection. Where has empathy for others gone in a world defined by anonymous superficial sex gods and sex goddesses? The short-term effect is a growing population of both male and female narcissism. Self-love has replaced romance and a love for others. If self-love and power are the goals, then the partner or partners have little value. They are but props in a one-person show. There is nothing beautiful about an idol having no soul. I am glad to sit on the sidelines for this kind of social horror show. However I do have to take a piece of responsibility for society's death march. In defense, I should admit, I unwittingly made the journey too. After all, who was I to be judgmental and define the line between healthy and unhealthy sexual behavior. However I do believe such a cautionary line exists.

On a lighter note a few years ago, I ran into Susan M. Susan was Mrs. Smith's daughter, and she was one of the Dunelawn Hotel girls I lusted after. Sue was on the board of the renamed The Museum of American Art. She was fund raising at the time. We were talking about the old Village museum and the new additions added to the building. Being a little cheeky, I told her that the spot I had lost my virginity was now enclosed in a hallway leading to the toilets. Not missing a beat she responded, "Well! If you donate enough money, we'll put up a plaque commemorating the event." I thought her statement was very funny, but she looked like she was serious. How times have changed. Now let us return to my story's timeline of Detroit in 1963.

The World Could Be Cold and Gray

My winters were well defined. I went to school, study all evening and worked at C. R. Hill Co. to pay-off my sailboat debt. That was my entire existence. I did not have any friends. My family members were my only winter friends.

After too much studying, I would close my eyes and transport myself back to The Village. I have always had a good imagination and a better memory. The Village was a ghost I loved to be haunted by. The trigger memory was the sound of water splashing against my sailboat's hull on a late sunny morning sail. I had trained myself to be goal oriented, and I lived by it. I wanted to finish Cadillac Junior High and Redford High School with honors and go to college. My goal was to find a good job near The Village, plus have my summers free and explore the world from my little corner of heaven. Perhaps teaching was in my future, but those plans were shattered.

I learned just how fragile life was on November 22nd 1963. President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. We got the word as school was letting out. The information about what was really happening was sketchy. On my commute home people riding the bus were in shock. Someone turned up a transistor radio, and the passengers fell silent in emotional pain. By mid-afternoon, surrounded with Grandpa, Grandma and Mom, we heard that the President was dead at Parkland Hospital. The event slowly unfolded live on TV over the next few days. The world saw Jack Ruby shoot Lee Harvey Oswald to death. This happened live on black and white television for the whole world to see. "Jack Ruby?" I thought there must be thousands of people named Jack Ruby. Even my ex-brother-in-law Tom knew a Jack Ruby in Detroit's under belly. At the time this fact did not seem important. Our lives and personal feelings were greatly defined by this tragic death. The image of Caroline and little John-John standing for hours before Kennedy's plane would be landing.

John-John standing at attention as the black caisson carrying their father's body brought the country to tears all over again. The symbolism was very important. The same caisson had been used to carry President Lincoln's body at his state funeral. It was also used to transport ammunition during the Civil War.

The country changed, and questions remained about the assassination. It was a curious footnote that Doctor Shaw who was first on the scene to try and help Kennedy had been Mom and Dad's friend at University of Michigan in the early 1930s. Ruby, Tom and now the doctor presented an interesting connection. Why did I not think it strange?

Again, I must step out of my story's timeline. Another strange connection would not happen until 1975. My ex-brother-in-law Tom Davis was murdered. That was all we knew. He was stealing copper wire at an old industrial sight in the middle of Nowhere, Texas. The story was that he must have cut into a live wire and was electrocuted. He must have dropped onto the wires. His family reported him missing and described his car. A week later, a patrol car found his car at the sight. No one noticed Tom hanging on the wires. Another week passed and a second patrol car happened to look up and saw something hanging there. The dental records proved it was Tom.

My sister Coe flew down for the funeral. She was asked and she thought it proper. Tom had married twice after Coe and it made for a slightly uncomfortable wake. After the ice melted, the wives seemed to get along fairly well. Then their stories were shared. Tom's second wife, had the show-stopper of all stories. It seems they were living in Dallas area in November of 1963. They were engaged and life seemed normal, however her Dad had problems with her choice of a partner. Her parents were connected to banking up in Connecticut and they were very prominent. On the morning of the assassination, Tom woke her and said she had to pack. They had passports for the honeymoon, but had no plans to travel until then. All he would say was they had to get out of Dallas.

This was hours before Kennedy's plane would be landing. When asked "Why?" He said, "We have to get away...it does not matter where." When Kennedy was killed, they were somewhere over the Atlantic on their way to Algiers. "We did not know anyone in Algiers!" She said.

At the order of our State Department, they were put under house arrest for a week and had to wire good old Dad, in Connecticut, for money. They were questioned and released.

They flew back to the states, but lived in Connecticut for a while, but not going near Texas. She said, he said, "The Organization would be after him *for something he did not do*" Not surprising for a paranoid schizophrenic to claim, however there were other connections that really raised some red flags. Like wanting to get out of Dallas before the assassination and his visit to Maine years earlier when he spoke about "the organization." His profile was similar to Oswald's profile. They could have been friends, with much in common.

Like a military and criminal background, obsession with guns, mental and emotional problems, and a shadowy Cuban connection. However no one could find any connection and people looked. In the late 1970s a book was released asking the question in its title, "Who was Jack Ruby?"

Tom was connected to the Jack Ruby in both Detroit and Dallas and also knew Oswald.(ref. "A Coup in Dallas") Tom's name was listed in the Jack Ruby book with about eighty other questionable deaths connected to the Kennedy murder. In all the theories surrounding the event, Tom's connection has never really been examined. Until now, I have kept quiet in respect for my sister and her son. This strange event must be written down somewhere, so why not in my story of strange relationships. The information above came from my sister Coe and I have tried not to connect any dots. Back to the following spring of 1964 and new beginnings. (See appendix at the end of this book – A theory for Kennedy assassination)



Graduation Picture of my classroom at Cadillac Junior High -
1964

Spring of 1964

I graduated from Cadillac Junior High School with honors. It was another milestone in my journey. I could hardly wait to go on vacation in Maine with my friend Bill and my sailboat. I could not make the money I wanted to make over the winter. The Playhouse pay was not going to work very well in helping me pay off my debts. I needed a better job and working with kids closer to my age. Dunelawn came to mind, so Mom called Mrs. Smith; and in no time, I had a job.

The summer of 1964 was one to remember. Not only did the job at the Dunelawn turn out to be slave-like...eighty hours a week for \$25.00 a week doing hard work. Early morning, my job was to bring down visitors heavy bags. Between bags Mrs. Smith had me working in the kitchen washing dishes from breakfast. The very large lawn had to be cut only during a certain time period starting at noon and stopping at two o'clock. At that rate it took all seven days to cut the grass even if the weather cooperated. From two to five in the afternoons the garden needed weeding and I was the bellhop when needed. I just had time to bike the mile back home, shave / shower and to bike back to work dinner serving and later washing more dishes. I now understood why the girls I lusted after looked tired...they were tired from being slaves.

The weather did not cooperate even when I could think of going sailing. A fog bank sat the entire summer just a little off the shore. Something had to give after just two weeks of this Hell.

First, I visited the Playhouse and discovered they were desperate for car parkers. Bill and my wages would go up to the state's new minimum wage around \$1.50 an hour. For the easy 24 hours a week of the Playhouse job that turned into a weekly paycheck of \$36.00 and, if the weather ever changed, Bill and I could go sailing again. I knew I would have to give notice so they could replace me at Dunelawn.

I also anticipated a fire storm from Mrs. Smith and asked Mr. Bill Traber if this would cause any problems between The Playhouse and Dunelawn. I guess the timing was right because something had already caused a small riff between them and my actions would not make a difference.

With this in mind, I walked into the lioness den and gave my notice politely. Mrs. Smith was not use to anyone challenging her power and she came at me with claws out. It was difficult, but I stood my ground. In pure hate she said, "I'm going to fix it so that you will never be able to work in this town again." "We will see about that!" I said and headed out the door. "Don't bother coming back." She said.

"That will not be a problem. Good night." I smiled. The door slammed behind me and I was free to start immediately on opening night of the Playhouse. Bill's family had timed it so they would be there for him to start opening night too. It was as if the winter had never happened, except for the fact, there was a completely new group of usherettes and they were younger and we were a year older. Connie and Sparkie Nelson were the girls to watch. They were students of Mr. Bill Traber at Trapp Academy in Kittery and could do no harm in his eyes. Bonnie P. was one of their followers. The queens were out of our league, but Bonnie had a personality that matched her name...bubbly and eager to please. She wanted to get out from under Connie and Sparkie's shadow and she had her eye on me.

Not having a "bed on wheels" was a major disadvantage, but just over the river and in the woods was a high and relatively dry graveyard that had escape routes in two directions. It was an old graveyard, but John Lane the gay owner of The Playhouse took good care of it. We found our little playground there and made good use of it anytime we could. After a very close call, we thought it was wise to play it safer. John Lane knew someone was trespassing and was on the hunt. He kept looking for whoever was just out of reach, but could not catch us. It just added to the fun. Bill was interested in Sparkie, so we went our separate ways chasing different girls.

My Fair Lady was one of the big musicals that summer. The actor who played Freddie was an out-of-control gay man, but I did not know it. In the first position, as a car parker, our job was to turn traffic left to the parking field. As I directed cars left, he would try and grab me as he drove straight into the employee's parking. It seemed as if he was just another backstage idiot. I gave it little thought.



Parking cars at the matinee

However one matinee, he and a woman with a camera came up behind me and put me in a headlock. I was dragged to the grass ellipse where he wanted me to pose with him. I was brought up to be polite, but this was way off base on his part. A picture was snapped and I was breaking free from his grip. As I backed off the grass, he started to chase me. We ran around the ellipse twice with theatre patrons wondering what was going on. I decided the only solution was to go directly to the top. I was going to take the chase into the front office and drop it on the owner's deck. Freddie did not follow and I had to do some fast-talking to explain myself. Mr. John Lane was not happy with the situation and I thought that would take care of the matter. However it did not.

Soon after the musical started, I was getting a drink in the locked concession stand at the left end of the lobby. I had worked there long enough to know the feel of the place. Someone was walking around like a caged animal trying to get out, but in this case it was trying to get in. Peeking out of the sliding wall, I could see Freddie. I stayed hidden in the concession until he had given up or so I thought. He had gone out a side door. I waited a few minutes before leaving, but as I looked out the exit door there he was. He saw me too and turned to give chase. I had told the usherettes the story and they were outraged. I knew they had gone into the theatre to watch the show from the middle back row.

It was the safest place I could think of, so in I ran and landed in the middle of six girls. They figured out what was going on in a flash and formed a human wall of three girls on each side of me. At what point would this guy give up? He tried to reach over the right flank of girls, but was scared off by the girls slapping at his face. It did not take long and he was gone, but I did not know it until later that it was over.

The Village had always been known for its gay population, but this was the worse example of out-of-control behavior I had ever seen. The word came from the guys who worked the backstage that he was worse back there. They had a scoreboard as to what he would try or grab. By the end of the run his score was way over 1200 points. I guess my direct approach with Mr. John Lane was the final straw that ended it. He was not done with me. Every show he would do something to keep me on edge. I wanted to return the feeling, so on closing night we broke into his car and positioned three rotten eggs behind his accelerator pedal. That was the end of Freddie.

I guess I did not bother to ask Bonnie how old she was, but half way through the summer she had her parent's car. She was driving! This opened up all kinds of possibilities, but I could not guess what she had in mind. At first she came up to sail and we had a good time. The relationship was never based on love, but like the year before on friendship. I think two things changed by mid August.

First, her having wheels made her aware I was younger by a year or two and second she was breaking off from Connie and Sparkie and wanted to create a power base of her own. The numbers of usherettes were decreasing as the summer wore on and she was filling the positions with younger friends who were just getting out of the house for the first time.

John Lane was a strange man who acted as if he was above everyone else, except for one man and his “Stars”. The one man was Henry Weller his accountant and business manager. When problems occurred and they did often, the front office figuratively ran in circles until Thursday afternoon when Henry arrived from New York City. It was like Moses calming and parting the sea. I could not believe the power this man had without even raising his voice. He did not know any of the kids who directed cars and sold candy and soda, but a little more than ten years later he would become our accountant in a business that had been the original Playhouse and my Dad’s best friend. Ten years still into the future...Henry, my girlfriend and I would start traveling the world. He called me his cameraman. I would introduce Henry as one of my first employers. In his later years, he watches all fourteen trips over and over again. In fact, after I stop typing this section (in October of 2013); I’m going to call him at his apartment in N.Y.C. and check in on him. At 87 years of age, he still lives on his own. He is like a father figure to me and he has helped me through the years like he has with many an old friend. The Playhouse was very important to me on many different levels.

The Problem with Grandma’s Advice

In the fall of 1964, my Grandma broke character and said some things to me that can only be viewed as predictions. Completely out of the blue she made four statements to her fifteen year old grandson that had no context to anything I could think of as being pertinent to me. She and Grandpa had returned from Maine for the winter.

We were in the kitchen making lunch. She stopped what she was doing, looked me in the eye and said the following four statements:

1) “You are ‘born to be hanged...” You will think it is just luck that gets you out of trouble, but it is something more.” [Her statement caught me by surprise and confused me.]

2) “There is an old saying, ‘It is better to have loved and lost, than to have never loved at all.’ That’s hogwash! It is far better to have loved and lost, loved and lost, loved and lost... than to have just loved and lost.” [Again what was I to make of this peal of wisdom?]

3) “All your life you will think you have been lucky in everything, but Love. When all is said and done you will find that you have been extremely lucky in Love as well. You should not worry.” [Ok! I’ve never had a girlfriend yet. What does this have to do with me?]

4) “Finally girls (who have known you) will find that it is far better to be an older man princess than a younger man’s slave.” [Now you have gone completely around the bend, let’s make lunch. I would do anything to change the subject matter.]

I had no idea where all this advice was coming from, but what surprised me was that I remembered it in detail years later. The family had no interest in the paranormal...we never discussed it. I did not even think of her statements as predictions until I was writing "A Very Strange Life." I did not use it as an example of a strange event in my report. However it begs the question what was she smoking? Was it psychic information, old age or both? If it were “monkeys and typewriters,” I should have bought a Lottery Ticket that day.



The last Christmas with Grandma



This picture only shows one-tenth the full size of the school.

Redford High School (Fall 1964)

Redford High School was a new start. My summer of fun had to become just dreams. A cold Detroit was still crumbling from within. Redford High was far enough away from the decay to pretend it was not happening. I found myself going in the opposite direction on Grand River Ave. to ride the bus to Redford as I had ridden to get to Cadillac. Redford was very large. Over 3,000 students were enrolled in all grades; my class of 1967 had over 750 students. Competition was going to be stiff and I would have to work harder. I was taken back to see faces of Vetral students from my near past. I thought I could put that behind me, but a revengeful spirit started to grow in me and looked for opportunities to be able to strike. I did not want to hurt anyone. I just wanted to show them I was back and prove I was not beaten. I took my time; I knew it would not happen overnight, but one by one I would get them. My grades would be my weapon of choice.

Again my winter was going to be lonely and driven. The fall semester passed as predicted, only memories of The Village and sailing were of any relief. Holidays had lost the joy of my childhood. I worked at C. R. Hill Co., in downtown Detroit on Saturdays, as a stock boy and was well on my way to paying off my debts with Grandpa and Grandma.

I made myself find interest in my classes. Oddly mathematics and especially algebra came easily to me. My dyslexia only seemed to affect me in certain ways and I was compensating for it. After Christmas, we were mailed our grades and I had three A's and two B's which just won me a place on the Honor's Roll. I wanted all A's and that was my goal. Also in the spring, I signed up for Driving School. Mom was willing to sell me her car...a 1962 silver Chevy Bellaire. She would sell it to me for what she could get for it in a trade.

We guessed that to be around \$200.00. While it would be a savings program going from the sailboat, directly to the car. I would have my own wheels by the spring of 1965.

My Grandma's Plan

It was the day after my birthday and my Grandma had a plan. She had spent the entire afternoon with a travel agent and she wanted to take a cruise around the British Isles with Mom. All their lives were occupied with the Spanish-American War, World War I, the 1918 Spanish Influenza, Prohibition, a Great Depression, World War II, the Korean War, and now the Vietnam War. The last war was said to be a police action. However every night at dinnertime on the News, tens of millions Americans watched what we all thought was a war on TV. She had wanted to travel and could not. Finally, she had a plan to travel.

Between five and six in the afternoon, she and Mom talked about her idea. However she started having pain from indigestion and said that she didn't want to eat right then. She excused herself and wanted to rest in her bedroom. I was studying in my room and asked her if I could get her anything. She thanked me, but looked worried.

Around seven, Dad came home and we sat down to eat. I asked if Grandma was all right or if there was a problem. We would check in on her after dinner. A really big snowstorm was coming and if she needed to see a doctor, the earlier in the evening the better.

We found her in the bathroom trying to throw up. I could not help anymore with Dad and Mom on the scene, so I went back to studying. Grandma and Dad had had their problems over the years, but they were family. I was impressed by Dad's concern; he stayed right with her. Mom went back down stairs to tell Grandpa about the situation, but I could feel she was worried. I could hear that her problems were getting worse.

Grandma was moaning with pain and very restless. I was frozen in denial of just how bad her problems were and buried myself in my book. There was nothing I could do, I told myself. Around 8:30, I went to the bathroom and looked in on them. Dad was in bed holding her, but her moans were sounding weaker. I then went downstairs and found Mom and Grandpa together looking very scared and not talking much. I went back to my books, but I could feel death was coming and it did.

Grandma stopped moaning a little after 9:00. I did not cry when Dad told me the sad news. I escaped into studies and just accepted the fact as being a part of life. She was 85 years old, I loved her and now she was gone. All the tears of the world would do nothing to change it. When the people came to take her body away, I stayed in my room. However I did look out of the window in time to see them pull away and the snow started to fall.

For me, life had a strange disconnect that day. One moment she had a plan to travel and the next moment she was traveling, but not exactly the trip she had wanted. My regret was for her reaching for a dream and her not being able to achieve it. This memory must be part of the driving force behind my wanting to travel. [As of October of 2013, I have made over 85 major trips. I just realized that was one trip for every year Grandma lived. If there is an afterlife, I hoped she tagged along.

February “29th 1965”

In January a new semester started at Redford High School. A new transfer student sat in the first row of French class and was of great interest to the rest of the class.

Her name was Anna K. and she was from Toronto Canada. She was a very beautiful Polish girl. It was clear from her standing up to address the teacher, she had been taught by nuns.

The rest of the kids started to make fun of her and I knew where this was going, because I had been there. After class I caught up with her in the hall and introduced myself. She was thankful that I had thought enough to explain that we did not stand up to address the teacher. Her next class was in the same direction as mine, so our walking together became a nice habit.

Anna was flirtatious and had a European allure. Her personality was overly sweet bordering on theatrical. In my mind she was like someone out of a movie and she seemed to want to be friends. I became instantly infatuated. I was still a virgin when it came to the art of female persuasion. In hindsight, I think a personality tool she had developed to manipulate her dad was now being extended beyond the family. Also I was a hungry boy wanting to be loved. Anna was smart, superficially mature in conversation, but seemingly warm as a kitten inside her heart. By the end of a month, I had her so high on a pedicle, it was only time before she would have to fall.

High school dances always seemed to have themes. The theme for the end of February was a Sadie Hawkins' Day Dance. I was not sure about its origin, but I thought it was connected to a leap year event where the girls asked the boys out or something.

Details did not seem to matter much seeing the previous year was a leap year and 1965 was not. Standing in the school hallway, I was in shock when Anna asked me to the dance. I did not even worry that the only dance I was learning could not happen on the dance floor of the high school auditorium. I suppressed my enthusiasm and simply said, "Yes! Thank you." The rest of the day my feet were off the ground; I thought I was in love for the first time.

For Valentine's Day, I bought her a big box of chocolates and a card. She looked pleased, but said, "You know that stupid high school dance we are going to? I have a better idea. My bedroom has a nice enclosed veranda where we can get to know each other better."

Let's forget the dance and you can come over to my house and we can have fun." "Sure! That's a great idea." I said God! It was the best Valentine and Birthday gift I could have asked for. I was dreaming of the possibility of a "dance number five" with a girl who I thought I could fall in love with. Life seemed very good indeed and it was not even summer.

The illusion of success in life hit me hard. Grandma was gone. Her ashes were in a brass cube that sat next to a sadden Grandpa. He did not want to talk about it. We acted like she was still with us if only in our hearts. The snowstorm that hit the night of her passing brought Detroit to a stop for a few days, but it gave us time to start the process of healing in our hearts.

I was not going to let anything get in the way of Anna and my "dance" no matter how it turned out. The Sadie Hawkins' Day dance was not occurring for us, February 29th 1965 (an imagined Leap Year) did not ever exist, but Anna and I had a real date. Life was full of illusions to dance with; the trick was to know the moves.

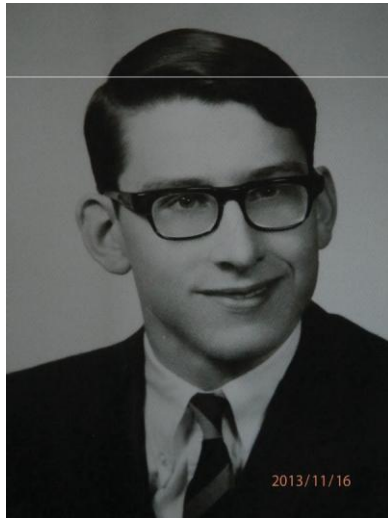
Our "date" was set for Friday night at six o'clock in the evening. Her family's house was just down the street and two blocks over, just about at my bus stop on Grand River Ave. Soon I would be able to drive, but for now I could walk to her house. Not sure what was Polish customs; I rang the doorbell and smiled. A well-dressed short gentleman opened the door. I was going to introduce myself to him when he said, "Welcome, Please come in." The house was small, but clean and comfortable. The center hallway had a dining room on the right, a living room on the left and stairs running up to bedrooms straight ahead. In the living room was a grandma sitting in the corner and out from a side door popped a cute little blond girl who looked at me very inquisitively.

I tried to introduce myself to Grandma, but she only looked confused. The little girl came to my aid with an explosion of Polish directed to Grandma. Only then did I get a nod and a toothless smile.

I thanked her and asked her name. "I'm Anna's sister Christina. As if on cue, Mrs. K. enters and we exchange niceties for a third time.

Anna finally came down the stairs to join in. She takes my arm and leads me up the stairs to her room. I waved goodbye and in doing so pick up a hint of a smile from each of them, like some kind of shared joke that was unknown to me. Either that or the Polish were very modern and friendly. Her room was small but cute and as promised a door led out to a three-season veranda that was pushing the season a bit. I was not going to be taking my coat off soon. There was music, snacks and some guy sitting around the corner on a couch with a look on his face that reflected my surprise. Without missing a beat Anna said, "Chip this is Mark," and in turn, "Mark this is Chip." Both of us were completely blindsided by this turn of events. Our first reaction was purely animalistic; we were sizing each other up for a fight. I knew I could beat him, but what the hell was going on here. Anna realized she needed to use her power to control us, so she started talking about how much the two of us had in common as she passed the snacks around. It was now clear why a conservative Polish family would have no problems with Anna entertaining two males in her bedroom. I should have known from the hidden smiles.

It was as if they were collectively saying, "You only think you are going to try and have sex with Anna. Are you in for a ride! Somebody is going to get 'screwed' and it is not Anna."



Mark S. - 1967

Mark and I had both been tricked and we knew it. Anna pointed out one of the biggest similarities that caught both our interests, we were both sailors.

Also, at the age of fourteen, we both had bought our own sailboats. I could feel the wind change happening. Guardedly, we were sizing each other up in a different way. Mark had a boat down at the Detroit Yacht Club, but did not have a car to get there. I had a sailboat in Maine, but not in Detroit. However I would soon have a car and driver's license to allow us access to Mark's sailboat. The train of logic took only a second for both of us. Anna was a lousy date, but maybe by accident, a great matchmaker. Only once did I have to give Mark a nose bleed when he had given up completely on Anna and tried to get a feel. He did not hold that against me, nor did I hold it against him. We, after all, had business to discuss and a future to develop. Each of us had problems with finding good friends, so adversity likes company.

Anna and I were another story. I liked her family and spent as much time with them as I did with her. Mr. and Mrs. K. had survived multiple World War II conflicts. He escaped Poland during the German invasion, walked to Italy through occupied territory, fought in France with the French until it fell, escaped to England, trained to be a Polish tank commander, invaded Europe with the British forces and survived the warfare until the end of the war. Not a small accomplishment and I listen to his stories by the hour. Mrs. K. did not escape the Russian invasion of Poland. Her brother had been a forest ranger and that was enough to get her and her mother sent to Siberia to a work camp or farm. Years went by in harsh conditions and her mother could not make it. She was on the edge of survival when the Russians joined the Allies and a deal was struck to release the poor Polish prisoners. The only transportation was a horse cart to a train station. The trains were taking them as far as the Caspian Sea. There they were loaded onto old ships and taken south towards India (controlled by the British). The last harsh ordeal was walking through Afghanistan. From India she was taken to England where she and he met and married. Now that was a story worth retelling. I figured Anna and I were a long shot, but "love" is blind. She really was not allowed to date until she was eighteen.

By then she was already in love with André, a Polish kid she met at summer camp. I kept trying to improve my potential position with her. She and I even went to the same university, but rarely dated. One Christmas, I tried to make my move when I heard Andrea had been arrested for drug dealings in California. I was correct that the great André was history, but now there was another Polish Prince in the picture Jack B. I was discussed with years of my chasing and no green lights for any intimacy. I told her, "I wish the two of you only happiness and goodbye." I had been in love with a dream and not a real person.

For three years, I ignored any communications with her. I was involved with somebody else. In the summer of 1971, I needed a job and sent out a wide network to try and find one. Mr. K. came through for me with a job building Massey-Ferguson trackers. It was very hard work, but the pay was great for that time period.

My life was a mess that summer and Anna was engaged to marry Jack in September. As a thank you to her for asking her father to give me a job, I asked her over to have a steak dinner and I cooked a really wonderful meal. I was trying to clean up a little and set up for a desert surprise when I noticed Anna was no place to be found. I called out her name and no answer. Worried I went upstairs and on the bed was Anna. She was beautiful, but what the hell! She was engaged to be married. For over five years, I chased her, because I was in love with a dream. So now, because she thought she could reel me back for "Let's do it, because we never did it," fling; I was looking at Anna's version of desert. Part of me wanted to take the prize that had escaped me for five years. Another part of me said, "No! This is not the relationship I had wanted with you." It was like having two different people in me at the same time. Yes! No! Yes! No! Yes! No! I tried, but my body was conflicted and this was a very bad thing, especially for men.

It was not a dance, but a very disappointing event at best.

I was trying to save money and was not going to go to her wedding in Toronto. Somehow it did not seem right. Also to get to the morning wedding, I would have to get up at three and drive straight to the church in my suit. Anna's family wanted me there and I felt I could not let them down. Little sister Chris wanted me to dance with her at the wedding. On the phone, Anna wanted me to get there. I told her I would be there and I was. I had seen enough, the princess had really fallen far. I left shortly after the wedding for the long drive back to Detroit.

I had limited contact with her after her wedding. Time did not treat the family very well. However there was still a "dance" I owed Chris.

Mark and I...Dangerously Troubling

[Author's note: Only upon reflecting on our "friendship" for the purpose of this report did I appreciate just how dangerous we were together. It was a miracle we both survived. Though we have seen each other a dozen times since, the only thing we have in common is the complete craziness of those years. In the early 1970s, we just walked away from each other like crooks after a huge robbery. As a "friendship" it was more than very odd.]

After "Anna's threesome" Mark and I started doing things. We both took Driver's Ed. He joined clubs and I joined the Chess Club and the Exchange Club with Anna. Mark said, "A club is the only way you'll get at Anna's chest." We were kids trying to grow up.

Mark and Anna got me, partially, out of my self-imposed isolation. I found them to be interesting and through them I became more defined socially at Redford. We were some of the smart guys who did our own "thing." I was developing a reputation from math and science grades. It guaranteed isolation from most students. Mark was interested in writing and political science. We simply did not talk about school.

Mark had his own physical oddities. Having a low waistline meant he had a little bit of a duck walk going on and his shirt could never stay tucked in. It became his unwanted expression of independence. The thick dark rimmed glasses and almost out of place hair completed the picture. His personality expressed a feeling of wanting to be somewhere else. A distracted self- absorbed quality that I thought was Mark just being himself. We were not a likely team for anything other than collectively having the resources to sail.

Sailing was the cement of our friendship. As I have written, in "A Very Strange Life", friendships have been formed on less. There also was a bad chemistry. During this period of our lives, I do not think either one of us saw the dangers. He and I wanted to push our limits. It is a natural part of animal behavior to break from the nest and develop a sense of independence. However this was something different, because it bordered on playing with a sociopathic view of the world. It would be too easy to point to the possible influence of a disintegrating Detroit for the answers. Detroit was a society overwhelmed with Police problems inside and out, it was just the wild west of Michigan.

However it was our good luck that elevated the relationships to being dangerously troubling to me. The potential was there for evil, hence the reason for calling the next chapter "kissing the cobra." This next chapter was compiled from my high school journal for the purpose of painting a picture in words of the craziness of youth. Not wanting to reinvent the wheel, I include it again for continuity sake.

Kissing the Cobra

The following are entries from my Redford High School journal from the academic year 1965 to 1967. They serve the purpose of illustrating how I “walked the line” with Mark, Rochelle, and other “friends” during high school years, and sum up the universal craziness of teenage life. In the late 1960s, baby boomers were becoming teenagers, and they could be dangerous at times. In those years, luck substituted for good judgment, and my luck was working on over- time.



Belle Isle – With a playground this large, what could go wrong???

The B.I.B.C.P. - The First Sail of the Season

There are periods of my life I look back on and the adult in me just wants to cringe. Remembering the formation of the B.I.B.C.P. triggers a whole spectrum of feelings, from “what were you thinking?” to unbridled anarchistic freedom. It was a time when we explored the limits of our boundaries and lived a secret life somewhere between “Our Gang” comedies and the movie “American Graffiti”.

On the Friday of Mother’s Day weekend 1966 Redford High School was having a Sock-Hop. For various reasons, Mark S., John B. and I were not going to the dance. I had just obtained my driver’s license a few months earlier. Mark had the great idea I should get the family car and we should drive to the Detroit Yacht Club and go out sailing on his fifteen-foot “Snipe.” The winter had seemed so long and I was itching to get out on the water again. Plus, Mark’s idea trumped my lame suggestion of playing cards. John was a big kid who tried out for the football team. Mark was president of “The Quill and Scroll Society.” I just hid behind studying for good grades guaranteeing my invisibility to most of my classmates. I really needed a break from my monastic lifestyle. Given the mix, a more unlikely friendship would be hard to imagine. The friendship with Mark was parasitically based on our both owning sailboats and my access to a car; however, by the end of the night all of us would be bound to each other by blood, our blood.



John B. - 1967

The strong afternoon sun illuminated Belle Isle, the huge island in the Detroit River. As we drove over the bridge linking it to the city, we felt the freedom and excitement only having “wheels” could elicit. Snaking our way along the drive, we passed by great fountains. Off in the distance, a herd of deer ran from a golf course into the woods. We laughed at the prospect all these now-empty parking places would be packed tonight with steamed up cars. You had to know where you were going. The island was designed to confuse visitors, so it would project an air of mystery and exploration. We looped around the one-way road, through another golf course and saw the small island defining the privacy for the Detroit Yacht Club and giving the club more dock slips.



The Detroit Yacht Club around 1966.

Mark’s parents were both hard working teachers, so I could imagine how difficult it must have been financially to belong to this club. A small steep bridge slowed cars down, so a guard could check membership. The uniformed man looked very familiar. To my surprise it was old Mr. Jones. I said, “Mr. Jones! Long time no see, so how have you been?” He looked at me very suspiciously, and then broke into a huge grin, “Young Master Cook? How you have grown! It has been over seven years since we chatted after your swimming lessons.” I could feel Mark’s eyes on the back of my head, “Mr. Jones, these are guests of mine - Mr. B., and you seem to know Mr. Cook. We will be going out for a sail.”

“And your name, sir?” Jones was more formal. “Mark...S. Look under my Dad’s name, Eugene S.”

“Very good, Sir. Have a nice sail. And say hello to your lovely mother, Young Master Cook.”

“I will Mr. Jones, it was great to see you, take care,” I said.

“I think I’m going be sick. Young Master Cook, my ass! You could have probably driven in here without being a member,” Mark sneered.

“We are old friends, what’s your problem?” I asked.

“I don’t know, forget about it, and let’s get out there sailing,” Mark pouted.

It was not OK. Mark had an edge and I was not sure I liked it, but sailing was the reason we were here, so I tried to stay focused. Mark’s sailboat was one of the smallest boats at the club. So, in the pecking order of things, he had the very last slip in the tightest part of the lagoon. This being “last” might account for his snobby behavior; then again, maybe not. Down on the docks, Mark opened his duffel bag and produced a suit of bright yellow foul-weather gear.

“Expecting a nor’easter?” I asked with a smile.

“I got it for Christmas, and this is the first time I’ve had a chance to use it. The “Snipe” is a racing boat, so it can get wet at times.”

“Now you tell us!” John laughed.

“I wouldn’t worry about it...the wind isn’t that strong,” I said. With the normal confusion coming with the first sail of the season, we were off.

John looked ill at ease, “I’ve never sailed on this small a boat before.”

“There’s nothing to it, just do what we tell you, hold on tight, and be sure to duck if we tack. This isn’t called a boom for nothing,” I laughed.

“What do you mean by tack?” John asked. “a virgin sailor!” Mark snorted.

“Hey, we all have to start sometime, and this is as good a time as ever,” I defended. It was true; the Snipe did seem a little undersized for John’s large framed body. We all had to sit on the deck with our legs in a small well and hike out so as to keep the boat from healing over too far. The payoff was speed: she was fast all right. I saw Mark was tacking up river; a smart move seeing the Detroit River had a four-mile-per-hour current. If the wind died for some reason, the current would help to get us back.

For the next two hours, we danced with the wind, tacking back and forth across the wide river. A row of tall smokestacks came into sight. Mark pointed out, “They are called the Seven Sisters and are useful in knowing where you are, especially at night when each has a flashing red light.” Even John had lost his initial fear and was getting into the sail. It was starting to get dark, so we decided we had had enough for this day. The current would make for a fast run back to the lagoon. Everything was going great, we had the wind to our back, the sail was at a right angle to the centerline of the boat and the yacht club was coming into sight. It is at times like this one’s attention should be on guard, because Murphy’s Law never sleeps. Neither Mark nor I saw it coming; the wind having blown so dependably from the north, shifted suddenly to the east and caught the sail. Without even seeing it happen, we jibbed and it caught John and me standing on the deck in the worst possible position. It is interesting, in an emergency, time seems to slow down, but so did our reaction. In slow motion, the sail slammed into us, and the sailboat was turning over. The cold water shocked us, but our brains went into overdrive trying to get a handle on what to do next. A hand grabbed at my leg, but was unable to hold on. I shouted, “Mark!” to John and did a jackknife dive toward the last feel of his hand. Much to my surprise, I ran into Mark’s flailing arms in the darkness and we grabbed each other. It felt as if he was being dragged down and he was taking me with him.

I tried to swim with my one free arm and hit something hard. It must have been John, because in no time I felt his hand grab onto my collar and, with what must have been superhuman strength, he pulled me, still holding onto Mark, to the surface. I came up right next to the upside-down sailboat. John had a death grip on the floating hull, but he looked very unhappy. I came up first and took in the needed air. Mark was next and he was coughing out water and was just short of panicking. He said he tied his pants at the ankles, but didn't tie the waist string, so as a consequence his foul-weather gear acted as a sea anchor, filling with water. We helped him out of his gear and it sank instantly. We tried to flip the sailboat, but the sail now was straight down, acting like a giant keel; it was impossible to right.

Something was missing as well: the long brass dagger board that acted as a keel was gone; it must have slipped out. I didn't think this was the right time to ask if he had remembered to tie it in place. With the fast speed of the river, we were passing the yacht club and could see people eating in the large dining room. Yelling was out of the question. We were too far and it was too dark to be seen anyhow. We clung in the cold darkness to the bottom of the boat for another hour. We not only floated under the Belle Isle Bridge, but watched as we shot pass the Detroit waterfront, unable to do anything. I was getting the shakes and I was used to the cold water of Maine.

Both Mark and John were so cold they could hardly talk. As good luck would have it, we saw a small fishing boat heading right at us. He must have seen us back-lit by the Detroit skyline. Soon he had a line on us, but we were too much for him to tow. He shot off a flare and in a surprisingly short time, the Coast Guard was on the scene. Finally, we were out of the water and safe on the deck of the rescue boat.

One last problem presented itself. When the Coast Guard tried to pull Mark's sailboat, the sail made the upside-down boat turn on its side and try to spin. It was too much drag even for the larger boat.

One of the sailors said they would have to de-mast the sailboat before they could drag it to the yacht club.

The look on Marks face was that of pure horror. I knew what he was feeling, because I owned a boat. The main problem was there was no way to get to the halyards to lower the sail. Unlike most small boats, the “ropes” were steel and were inside the wooden mast. We needed a winch to unlock the cam, which held the cable...a winch that was at the bottom of the river. I must have been nuts, but before anyone could stop me, I had put on a life jacket. I found a screwdriver from the ship’s toolbox and jumped in. I had helped Mark raise sail and knew how to spring the cam loose. Soon, I worked my way to the spot, contrary to the orders of the crew, and sprung the latch holding the cable. Mark said, “I owe you big time, Cook.” It took another hour, but we were back to the club and Mark’s boat was tied up to the dock. It was late, and most of the members had left for the night. We had the locker room and showers to ourselves. We were so cold we could not even talk for the chattering of our teeth. Not even the hot showers could warm us. Mark used towels to plug the floor drains, and it made a pool in the middle of the room. Fortunately, no one came in and stopped us. So, there we lay, prone, half-dead, wondering how we got into this situation. One of us pointed out there were guys having fun with their girlfriends less than a mile away.

“It’s just not fair!” I said.

“No, it’s not right and someone should do something about it,” Mark announced.

Jokingly, I said, “We should form The B.I.B.C.P., The Belle Isle Birth Control Patrol, in order to save the morals of the girls of Detroit.”

John came alive and said; “It is the least we can do to repay God for letting us live.” So, that night, a group of demented teenagers used really twisted logic to rationalize almost anything they wanted to do...all under the banner of the B.I.B.C.P.

The Detroit Yacht Club had an abundance of bored kids looking to get into mischief, so the ranks of the B.I.B.C.P. grew to twenty overnight as the word spread. In hindsight, it was like Mark was Peter Pan organizing the “lost boys,” and Belle Isle was Never-Never Land.

The Great Plan

Plans hatched for our first crusade for the morals of Detroit girls. We took inventory of assets we could liberate from the stores of the large yachts. What better day than Mother’s Day to strike terror into the hearts of all those guys who were planning to do unspeakable things to unsuspecting young girls. On Saturday, we worked on getting Mark’s boat put back into working order. The only losses were one yellow foul-weather suit, two cranks and a very expensive dagger-board. Mark placed the orders and would be back sailing within the month. However, it would take the summer to earn the money to pay for it. On the bright side, we were alive.

Upon returning to the club, we checked out “the golden mile,” where lovers came to park, almost nightly. Even the Detroit Police Department all but gave up on trying controlling the situation. Running as straight as an arrow for over a mile was what seemed like hundreds of parallel parking spaces. I guess the steamed-up windows were enough to pass for privacy. Our minds worked on overload plotting our plan. The lover’s boulevard ran directly into the woods, where the roads turned into a maze of tangled confusion. Just to make things interesting, these woods were also home to bridle paths and man-made rivers for canoeing only adding to the spaghetti-like escape routes. The bridges were like the one to the yacht club, designed as much for being a giant speed bump as for giving canoes enough headroom.

One bridge stood out in my mind for having all the elements of a Houdini act.

As a car approached the bridge, it would have to slow down or it would become airborne. On the other side, the road bends to the right and takes a driver through a series of twists and turns.

However, almost invisible to any driver was the crossing of the road by a bridle path running along the river. We mapped most of these paths and practiced the move of making a 90-plus-degree turn onto the bridle path from the down-slope of the bridge. This trick would only work at night. It would necessitate turning off the car's lights before turning onto the path and not breaking after executing the turn. The result would be a disappearing car. But, if the timing was just right, the driver following in chase would see a car disappear somewhere up ahead. This really took a lot of practice, because, if you undershot the turn, you were in the woods, and, if you overshot the turn, you would fly into the river. Hopefully, we would never need such an extreme maneuver.

Sunday afternoon, we parked a car in the first parking space along the golden mile. We then met up with rest of the new members of the B.I.B.C.P. and instructed them as to what part of the plan they would be expected to play. All were game to participate in the plan and we were under way. It took hours to get organized with the equipment: one World War II aircraft landing-light off the "Merry Maiden" with its power pack, six war time walkie-talkies for communicating with each other and six megaphones. Finding batteries turned out to be the biggest challenge, but the yacht club had many places to look. As it turned out, we really didn't need the walkie-talkies, but it is best to plan for everything. Another tricky part of the plan was how to mount the light in my car. We found lots of wood, but had to look for tools and parts to make it work. We finished by 9:45p.m., with time to spare. At 10:00p.m. the convoy of six cars left the yacht club en route to make history, if only in our minds. As we passed over the long access bridge and looped around the fountain, we could see the golden mile was packed with cars. At the appointed location, five of the cars pulled over.

Each car had two guys, a walkie-talkie and a megaphone. Mark, Bill M. and I pulled up to the first car. We had parked Bill's car there earlier to ensure control of the location. Bill jumped out and backed his car out so we could back into his spot. His job was to add to the expected traffic jam so we could make a clean get-a-way. At exactly 10:15, the five remaining cars took their places, evenly spaced along the golden mile. The walkie-talkies were not necessary to notify the cars when to start, because when Mark turned on the 100,000 candle-power aircraft landing-light, a beam of light shot through every car, turning sweet darkness into blinding daylight.

Five megaphones announced, "This is the Detroit Police Department, please get out of your cars with your hands upon your heads." I could not see all that was going on, but based on the reports from the other five cars and what I could see myself, all the effected cars where in an explosion of activity. Bras were flying, and pants and dresses were grabbed up in the sudden light. It was over in a matter of seconds. Mark doused the light and we were out of there in a shot, crossing to the service road of the golf course and speeding off to the safety of the yacht club. As cars pulled out of their parking spaces, it was instant gridlock. Bill M. was in place; blocking any car smart enough to give chase across the service drive to the golf course. We were the first to arrive at the club, and had the big light back in its home before the last of the cars made it over the bridge. Bill reported on the aftershocks of our activities with great excitement. Again, we had walked up to a line and made it back without a hint of danger. Testing limits and tempting fate was the game, but we cloaked it by pledging our unfailing commitment to the B.I.B.C.P. and whatever it stood for.

The Phone Call

Weeks went by and school was winding down. Soon I would be taking off to spend the summer in The Village, in Maine.

Mark's sailboat still did not have a dagger-board and we were landlocked except for the occasional sail on Bill M.'s Cal-20. Bill was a nice enough guy but he came from a lot of money. Mark and I found it hard to keep up with his spending habits. Our "plan" had worked well, but you cannot expect to be able to get away with it twice, nor would you want to. Our "group" was prone to jealousy from other cliques at the club, so it existed more as a fantasy than as a reality. Bill and Tom H. were in one such "money" clique, and their unspoken rules were too hard to follow. It seems the wealthier your parents, the more importance you somehow inherited on the docks of the club. A strange metric given the availability of other metrics, like how good a sailor one was, based on weekly races. Bill was being pulled away from us by Tom, so John, Mark, and I tended to hang out together. John could not make it for Friday night cards, but I was over at Mark's house anyway and we were at loose ends wondering what we could do. Talking about girls was the norm, and the subject turned to Tom's girlfriend, Donna Lipinski. Mark said Tom was obsessively scared Donna was going to get pregnant. It seemed like she was good enough to sleep with, but not good enough to marry if a child was on the way. I felt bad for this girl, whom I only saw once at the club, as Tom was taking her off to his Dad's boat. I didn't like Tom anyway, but this news put him at an all-time low.

"Someone should B.I.B.C.P. him," I told Mark. "How would you suggest doing that?" Mark asked.

"I don't know, but let me give it some thought," I said. Just then, like on cue, the phone rang.

Mark answered the phone and looked at me, "Hi, Tom. How is it going? ... You're at the club and going to have dinner in the "Binnacle" ...

It is probably nothing to worry about; she has been late before...No, I'm not going sailing this weekend...You know I have to wait for a new dagger-board...Sounds nice, do you need a crew? Oh, that's right, well have fun anyway. See you later, bye."

"What's up with him?" I asked.

"He's worried about getting Donna pregnant and he's planning to take another girl crewing with him over the weekend," Mark shook his head.

"What do girls see in this guy?" I asked. "He is a real jerk." As if from the center of my heart, an idea came to me, "Say, Mark! I just got an idea for B.I.B.C.P.'n Tom."

"What are you talking about?" he asked.

"Tom does not really know me; we have never spoken, so he would not know how deep my voice was, right?"

"Yeah... So what?" Mark asked.

"What if I call up the club and have him paged? And pretend I was Donna's father and ..." I smiled.

"Oh, Cook! You are bad. Do you think it will work?" he smiled.

"What else do we have to do tonight?" I grinned.

"The phone is ringing... Yes, could you have Mr. Tom H. paged please? Yes...I'll hold," I said with all the seriousness of an adult. Mark sat at his dining room table, with a big grin, wondering just how this prank was going to play itself out.

"Tom H. What do you want, because I'm about to eat dinner?" he said.

"Mr. H., you don't really know me, but this is Donna Lipinski's Father. You bastard! You got my daughter pregnant! My lawyer will be in touch with your father in the morning."

“CLICK!” went the phone as I slammed the receiver down and we broke into laughter. Tom was now feeling the bite of the B.I.B.C.P.

“Cook! You are lucky you are going to Maine next week; he is going to be going nuts. I wonder what he is going to do now. I hope this has not spoiled his hot weekend date,” Mark laughed.

We didn’t have to wait long. The phone rang and we went silent. Mark let it ring three times, “Hello, S. residence, can I help you? ... Oh. Hi, Tom, what happened...you mean he called you at the club?

This has to be somebody’s idea of a sick practical joke... How many of your friends know about Donna not having her period? Just me, I’m the only person you have told? ...Then it must have been Donna’s Dad, who else could it have been? No, I didn’t call you. But, what are you going to do, now? Yes, go eat your Pickerel dinner and I’m sure something will come to you...Gee, I’m sorry you are going through this nightmare. Call me, I should be in tonight, I have no plans.” It could not have been five minutes when the phone rang again, “Hello, S. residence...Tom! What happened, now? Someone ate your Pickerel dinner while you were on the phone with me. Are you sure the waiter didn’t think you were done? Oh, whoever it was left the empty plate. Boy, this has not been your day, has it?” It seemed like we were not the only pranksters having it in for poor Tom. We could not have arranged the dinner trick. It was during the summer while Mark was talking to Jim M., another “poor-not-so-little-rich boy,” when he admitted to having eaten Tom’s dinner that night because he was hungry and didn’t like Tom much either. Mark was as helpful as he could be, but nothing was going to help the situation. Over the next hour, and at least three more calls, Tom had worked himself up into a real state of hysteria. To make things worse, Tom’s father had gotten a jump on drinking and was already heading to the boat to sleep it off. Tom had decided to wake him up and confess to what he had done. It was at this point the joke had gone too far and we had to put Tom out of his misery.

I got on the other line and interrupted their conversation, "What, who is this? ... Mr. H.?"

"Yes, but how did you...get...on...this...? Mark, you son of a bitch was this all a joke?"

"You have just been B.I.B.C.P.'d," we said in unison. Tom was mad, but more relieved it had been a joke. The balance of power shifted that night. We had scored big in the hearts and minds of the dock-rats. I left for Maine with Mark in charge of things at the yacht club.

The Summer of 1965

Mark had not killed us and I was lucky to be driving to Maine in my own car. Mark had introduced me to a wild side of Detroit that had been invisible to me. At the time, I could not tell if this was a good or a bad thing. Anna, Rochelle and other girls were strangely drawn to Mark because of his unpredictability. It was as if some kind of motherly instinct was at work. I saw Mark, as an opportunity to access sailing, not be socially invisible, and stand on the edge of danger. The last reason was like a game. It was a different kind of metric for self-assessment of being successful. To me life was about succeeding financially, romantically, intellectually and in your spare time having a little fun. Unknowingly, Mark created for me a new metric of "saving the day" or the opportunity to be heroic in the eyes of some very nice girls. Girls, who just six months ago, I would not have felt worthy enough to talk to. The dangers were very real; I was smart enough to realize this was not just a game. However the allure of being a hero was too great.

I had saved Mark's life once and with Mark being Mark there was a good probability of having to do it again. As I drove to Maine, I wondered when I returned what craziness I would have missed. Maine had not changed; it had only slept over the winter. Bill and I got to work getting the Spindrifft in the water.

I told Bill the stories about Anna, Mark and the wild B.I.B.C.P. Bill, a stoic New Englander, could not quit see the attraction of Detroit's new social scene. I was not really able to explain it either, "I guess you would have to have been there." Was all I finally said to him.

We were starting a new summer with wheels, and Detroit was 826 miles to our west, so "out of sight...out of mind." When the Playhouse opened Bill and I were like cowboys at a pickup bar, but we were quickly disappointed. Either the girls were too old, totally uninterested, or related to John F., as in his sisters. In another case the twelve-year-old daughter of the box-office manager, was too young.

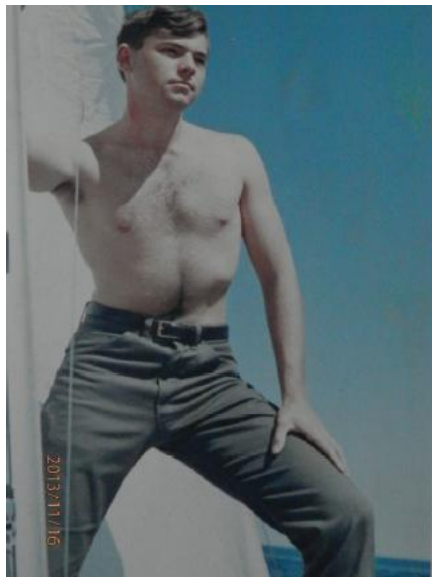
Cathy was twelve going on twenty-one, but had that slightly chubby cute look of an older Shirley Temple. She was bored and overly developed in more than one way. She was a pest. Everywhere we went she was there like a puppy wanting to be loved. There was something about her that hinted trouble. She wanted to be one of the guys and belong to our group and we did not want to baby-sit her.

The volume of traffic in the parking field necessitated an additional parker. A kid from Sanford, Dick D., was hired to fill the need. He quickly filled Cathy's need as well. They played a friendly game of strip poker (without stripping) and he took her to the beach to watch the submarine races before the intermission. As the story goes, he was also hired to cut the lawn at Cathy's home. On a very hot afternoon, Cathy brought Dick a pitcher of cold lemonade and cookies wearing only a hot smile. Dick was hooked.

I told him, "Be careful what you ask for...you might get it." It was too late she owned him. She had gotten her "foot" in the door of the group of male parkers and showed what she had to offer. He left early for school and Cathy was looking around to cement her position in our clubhouse. The competition was non-existence. As aside, at the end of August, an interesting event happened.

I had returned to the Playhouse after the theatre was dark. Classical music could be heard down the valley in the workshop. Under very bright lights Carole Lee Carroll and Darold Perkins were silently moving around with brushes on the end of sticks. From way up on the hill, they looked like dancers. However something was different, it looked like Carole was pregnant. She was. On January 9th, 1966 she gave birth to twin girls Alice and Sarah. Births are no big deal, but it is when the girl Alice, grows up to be one of my extended daughters. Relationships form sometimes in interesting ways. Going even further back, Carole Lee Carroll was one of the girls at Dunelawn who caught my eye. Sometimes it can be a very small world.

[Back to Cathy. Over the years, in one manner or other, she had marked all of us as hers. Years later in the 1980s, she and I had a kind of reunion on the beach and I apologized to her for the way we had tried to keep her out of being one of the guys. She was surprised by it. She said, "I just figured I had won in the end," with a wink. She was really a woman ahead of her time. However I was sad that I had not given her the respect she deserved and needed. My telling her my feelings finally ended our dance number six.]



Chip in the summer of 1966

Sailing in Storms

As stated, Bill and I sailed a lot. With adult family members, his sisters, with usherettes, and the occasional summer visitor. It became second nature to grab the sail bag, the oar and head out to pick up Bill as I passed his house on Shore Road.

Woodbury Lane brought us down to the footbridge that crossed over The Cove and led down to the docks. The Sieve would be partially sunk, but chained up. We would drag it up on the dock and just dump it out. I got very good at sculling my little punt. It was a method of standing up in the front and weaving the oar in a figure eight to propel the punt and us. At the sailboat, we would unhook the Boom Tent and fold it back on itself and put it away under the deck. The punt would be tied up to the mooring float, sails rigged to the mast, and motor started. Bow and Stern lines dropped and we were off.

The mooring system in the Cove created rows of boats with tight channels and I had to “thread the needle” very carefully. We would pick up any passengers at the dock and blow a whistle to get someone to push the button to raise the bridge. After clearing the bridge we were off. Most of the time we enjoyed a steady southeast wind that blew straight into the Cove. That made raising sails and getting out of the harbor and onto the open sea easy. By the summer of 1965, we could have done it in our sleep. The sails were not without its problems. Boone Island was due southeast of the Cove by ten miles, but the wind blew from that direction most of the time.

Kennebunkport was due north of the Cove by ten miles, but the same wind concerns existed for the return trip. Simply stated, you couldn’t sail into the wind. So if you wanted to sail upwind, you would have to sail in a zigzag pattern (tacking). This made the trip much longer than was practical for day tripping in a small sailboat. Trying it was risky on a good day and insane on an “iffy” day. On a beautiful late July morning, the wind was just right for a sail to Boone Island. Bill and I were up for the challenge.

Jack Kraus, my sister's second husband, and Paul Harvey, our neighbor from Detroit, both wanted to come. Jack was a high school civics teacher and eats punks like Bill and me daily. We tolerated each other at best, but I was the captain on my ship. Bill and I reluctantly agreed to my Mom's wishes and the four of us were off for Boone Island and a long sail. The sailing was great! A direct shot to The Island and back would make it a twenty-mile sail...long, but we could do it.

Mom watched us as we sailed down the coast and wondered if she should have checked the weather for the day. About two miles into the journey, the wind changed on us. Our plans had to change too. The new wind direction made a trip to Kennebunkport possible. With an eighteen mile per hour wind the trip should take around four hours.

We all thought that sounded fine, so with an adjustment to the sails, we were heading in the direction of Kennebunk. The wind was strong and my sailboat was flying over the water. Bright sun and blue skies marked our journey all the way to Kennebunk Beach. Paul and Jack had not sailed much and they were enjoying themselves. We did not try to go into the port because of the time issue...it was a little after 2:00 in the afternoon. Both Bill and I had to be back in time to work at 7:00 o'clock at The Playhouse. The wind changed again which necessitated our sailing along the beaches of Wells and The Village. Usually, in the afternoon, the wind starts to die down. We were looking at a stronger wind and the first signs of whitecaps. The skies were getting cloudy to the west, then darker than they should have been.

By the time we were crossing Moody Point, a storm was to our west and coming on strong. We were riding up and over some pretty large waves. If this set of conditions were not bad enough, I could see rocks under the water where I had not expected rocks to be. We were more than a mile off the shore. Luck was once again on my side and we had sailed over a shallow ridge of rocks on the crest of a wave that was on the verge of breaking.

An hour or less later, we would not have made it because the tide was going out. Paul and Jack were scared, they should have been. Even though we were just off the beach on The Village-Moody town line a very big storm was about to hit us. The sky to our west was blacker than black and the sand was pure white by contrast. Waves were huge and made the option of landing at the beach impossible.

We were between two storms that were about to collide. My gut feeling was to drop sail and try to motor in the direction of the Cove. I read the major wave action and hoped that would be enough to guide me in the approximate direction. Jack started to panic. He wanted to turn the boat around and drive it onto the beach. Bill and I knew it was far too dangerous and without a sound we looked at each other and we both thought the same thing. If he tried to take charge, we would let him try and make it on his own to the beach. We were heading by motor back to the Cove completely blind.

The rain started like a Hollywood disaster movie and the wind was no longer blowing from just one direction. We were being rocked from all directions at once. I had two five-gallon buckets plus two large bailers, all of us got to work so we would not sink. For more than three-hours we worked hard. Once, I had to refill the gas in the outboard motor and that was the most dangerous point of a very dangerous few hours. It was cold and getting colder. I navigated by the big rolling waves and kept them in the same relationship to my boat, as they were when I last saw my relationship to the Cove.

At exactly 6:00 in the evening, the rain stopped and the visibility started to clear. To my surprise, we were heading straight for the nun buoy at the entrance to the harbor of The Cove. Three hours of blind sailing and we were exactly where we wanted to be. We could see all of the neighbors on Juniper Lane out on their porches waving as if we were there to save them. Mom and Coe were screaming with joy. We just wanted to get warm, eat and get to work. Later I found out that Mom did call the coast guard about the weather. The storm was forming and was going to be very bad.

She gave them the details about my boat and they sent a rescue ship to Boone Island to find us. We were not there. The coast guard also got a call from a house near The Village-Moody town line saying a small sailboat had capsized and needed rescuing. In the bad weather, they must have seen us lowering the sails and thought we had flipped. I am grateful our “saviors” did not run us over in the zero visibility. Neither Bill nor I felt any emotions during the trouble. Everything was just a matter of fact and we did what we had to do. We did not even find it strange at the time. In recounting the event much later, I realize how much luck was involved and I remember Grandma’s first prediction, “You were born to be hanged!”

Mom was concerned with poor Paul, he had been completely silent. Wanting to make conversation she asked him if he had seen the sailor’s prayer on the stern of the cockpit, “Oh God! Thy sea is so great and my boat is so small.” Still shaken Paul responded, “Oh Mrs. Cook! I could not get pass, ‘Oh God!’ Thank you for the sail, but I don’t think I will ever be able to sail again.” Jack did not say much either. I do not think I ever sailed with him again. Bill and I were a little later to work and we saw Mr. John Lane and Mr. Bill Traber doing our jobs. They had no idea why we were late. The rest of the summer and the rest of my life would seem tame, or so I thought. Another season ended and it was back to Detroit and the B.I.B.C.P.

The Jim P. M. Memorial Road Rally

Returning from Maine, I entered my junior year of high school. A lot of things had happened in Detroit while I was gone. One thing in particular caught my attention. It seems a new member of the B.I.B.C.P., Jim P. M., decided to shine lights into cars that were “parking.” Not a smart thing to do, after the “plan” had been such a success. The learning curve tends to be steep on the street, and people have very long memories. It didn’t help things he ran into a mean bunch of guys who wanted blood.

I guess the car chase was fairly wild; his 1952 white Buick ended up stuck in the woods, and he had to trek through the eastern part of Belle Isle to reach the safety of the club. Mark's nickname for Jim was "gorilla-man," because he was wild. He possessed no fear and his arms hung down like an ape. After hearing he had been the one who ate Tom H.'s pickerel dinner, I knew I would like him. However, meeting him would have to wait, because it seems Jim's parents were none too pleased about having to get his car out of the woods and pay the fines.

The weekend I was coming home, Jim's Mom and Dad asked Jim if he would like to take a little Saturday drive with them. "Sure, why not," I could imagine him saying. As Mark's story goes, five hours later the car pulls into Howe Military School for boys some two states away. In the trunk were bags packed with Jim's clothes and a welcoming committee met them. It was a done deal. There was nothing left to do but feel sorry for him. So, when Mark got the great idea for a road-rally, no one argued about calling it "The Jim. P. M. Memorial Road Rally." The road-rally was to start at the Yacht Club and make its way to the American/Canadian border and cross into Windsor, Ontario. The cars would be time started at 10-minute intervals to ensure there would be no drag racing to the border. (It is important to note the geography of this part of Canada and the three main locations defined the course of the road-rally. Imagine this part of Ontario as being like a very large, right-hand thumb pointing west. Windsor would be at the most western tip of the thumb. Holiday Provincial Park would be at the southern bottom of the thumb, about 45 miles to the southeast of Windsor, looking out onto Lake Eerie.

The third location was Belle River, a small town about 60 miles to the northeast of Windsor facing Lake St. Clare. As a side interest, this is the only place where one must go south from the U.S. to enter Canada) After going through customs (a virtual rubber stamp event in those days), we were to take the shore drive to Holiday Provincial Park and do whatever it said to do in the first envelope.

Then we were to get to the lighthouse at Belle River by whatever route we thought would be the fastest. As the crow flies, it would be less than 50 miles, compared to 105 miles if one went all the way back through Windsor. Here was the catch: no roads show up on the maps going from south to north; it looked like empty farmland. There must have been small dirt roads of some kind connecting the farms. That was the challenge: to find a way from here to there, when the maps said, “you cannot get there from here.”

Once in Belle River, we were to open the second envelope, do as it said and get back to the club. The car to make it back in the shortest time would be the winner. At least this was Mark’s plan, but “the best laid plans of mice and men, oft go astray.” Boy, when it goes astray, fate really goes wild. Part of Mark’s plan called for each car to have a driver and a female date. I told Mark, “I can’t get a date for something like this at the last minute.” “Cook, you have to. The instructions in the envelopes require you do something with a date,” he said. He called me three times at work (I worked for my Dad on Saturdays at C.R. Hill Co). He kept telling me he was trying to find me a date, and was getting nowhere.

“Dad wants to work late, so I will have to take a bus home.

Mark, how can I find a date, time is running out?”

“I don’t know, Cook, just pick some girl up on the bus.” “Yeah, right! I’ll do the best I can.”

At 5:00p.m., I ran to the bus stop; it was packed with late shoppers and workers going home like me. As the masses crammed themselves onto the bus, there was one empty seat next to a girl, so I took it. We started to talk about how much fun it was, fighting one’s way home.

She asked me, “What school do you go to?”

“I go to Redford High. How about you?” I asked

“Small world, I go to Redford, too.” In all the classes there were over 3,400 students, so it didn’t surprise me I never had seen her before. I told her about the road-rally and the fact Mark said I had to have a date. I could not believe it when she said; “I don’t have any plans for tonight. A road-rally sounds like fun. My name is Suzie, by the way.”

“I’m sorry. I’m Chip,” I answered. Chip really was my nickname. “You are an answer to a prayer. Thank you, Suzie.” She gave me directions to her house. As it turned out her house was only five blocks from mine.

I picked her up at 7:00p.m. on the dot. I did not even have time to get out of the car, and Suzie was out of her house in a flash, “Let’s go!” she said. We made good time and were pulling into the club at 7:30p.m., when I realized this was the first time Mark was not with me and it might be hard to get into the club. To my relief, I saw Jones at the gate, “Young Master Cook, how are we faring tonight, Sir?”

“It is really good to see you tonight, and I mean it.” Luck must be smiling on me; everything was dropping into place. Truer words were never spoken. In the very back of the parking lot, I could see Mark timing the first car as it took off. It was John B., and it looked like he had one of the cheerleaders as a date. Behind him were four other cars, with Mark’s car at the end. I pulled around and got in line behind Mark. All of a sudden, my back doors opened up. Eddie G. and Bill M. jumped in and were surprised to see a girl sitting next to me.

“Mark said we were to ride with you. He said you didn’t have a date,” Bill said.

“Well, that’s OK, I guess. Suzie, meet Eddie and Bill,” I said. Mark was at the window, “I thought you could not find a date, Cook?”

“Mark, I would like you to meet Suzie. She goes to Redford, too, and we met on the bus this afternoon.” The guys in the backseat were giggling about something. “Hi Suzie. Let’s get going. I’ll leave and you wait 10 minutes before you can start.



A wet Rochelle D. as a Redford Cheerleader

Here are the rules, just read the instruction sheet. The letters are marked 1st and 2nd; even you can figure it out.” “Hey, Mark! Is Vida your date?” I asked. “Not so loud, Cook. I asked Shelley D., and she actually said yes. Can you believe it?” “No, I can’t,” I said in a state of shock. Both Mark and I had put Rochelle, or as we called her Shelley, so high on a pedestal she was more myth than real. Looking like a redheaded movie star, she acted as if she was an adult of 25. Everything she did was perfect: her dress, her speech...everything. Teachers even treated her differently.

To my knowledge, she had never scored anything less than 100% on any schoolwork. Too poised to be a majorette, she became captain of the cheerleaders. She was the president of the National Honors' Society, but passed on being the class president. She was the undisputed contender for class Valedictorian. How did Reverend D.'s perfect daughter Shelley end up with this crew?

Something was not right with the balance of the universe on this ill-conceived night. What was going on? Bill M. brought me back to reality, "...4, 3, 2, 1, let's go, Cook!" I started the car and off we flew. The Detroit skyline was truly beautiful from this angle, with the river and Belle Isle Bridge lit in the foreground. The tall buildings of city center were also lit in the background. This was the image used many times for car commercials. Mark was somewhere ahead of us with Shelley D. next to him, driving his father's light blue Pontiac. He must be thinking he has stacked the deck on getting her alone in the dark at Holiday Provincial Park. We will see how much privacy he has, because it was going to be his turn to be B.I.B.C.P.'d. Unconsciously, the car sped up, and we were making good time on Jefferson Blvd.

The traffic lights never did this; they were green all the way to the Tunnel going under the Detroit River. I would not be surprised if we were not on Mark's tail going through customs. As we got in queue at one of the booths, I could see Mark and Shelley right ahead of us in the next lane.

In my ear, a bag rustled as if a wino was trying to conceal a bottle. I looked up to see Eddie passing the bottle over to Bill M. "What the hell are you doing? We're going through customs for Christ's sake!" Wait just a minute; a light went off in my head. "Eddie, run up to Mark's car and give the bottle to him like you are giving him a gift," I smiled. Eddie did so without any complaint and was back in no time. "What did he say?" I asked. "Gee, thanks Eddie, that's very nice of you!" he laughed. "I hope the customs guy saw it. Mark won't be going very far tonight," I laughed and almost busting a gut. My happiness was short-lived, because in no time Shelley's side of the car opened and a pale, long arm placed the bag on the pavement out of sight of their booth's attendant.

I bet Shelley had to point out the problem they might be facing. Our line was moving faster than theirs, and there was a chance we might clear customs first. "Roll down your windows, we don't want any smell of booze," I said. "Chip! Look over there. That's my brother's car and two other cars in the far lanes," Bill shouted. "That means only John B. is ahead of us, if we can pass Mark," I said, beginning to taste victory. However, Mark did get through just ahead of us, but we were on his tail during Saturday night gridlock in downtown Windsor, Ontario.

It was slow going to River Drive leading out of the city and down to Lake Erie. The light changed and traffic began to clear, but another red light stopped us at the last light before we would have a straight shot to the park.

It was a stupid, crazy move, but I did it and just by luck no one got hurt. When the light turned red for the crossing traffic, I knew we had 5 seconds until our light turned green, so I judged the distances and went for it. I pulled around Mark into the oncoming lane and got in front of him as the light changed green. We were out in front on our way to the first stop, some 40 miles southeast. Mark was not happy. He drove like a mad man trying to pass us on the two-lane road running along the Detroit River. It was clear I was going to have my hands full keeping him from passing us. Remembering he was driving his father's car, I yelled to Eddie, "Wind down the window on your side, try to find my snowbrush under the seat, and if Mark tries to pass us, beat his car with the snowbrush." "Are you kidding? Mark is going to be so pissed," Eddie said. "No, he made up the rules; look on the instructions. Other than the rules stated (nothing was said about snowbrushes) there are no rules. So, Mark, "with thy words, I pursue Thee." And so it went for almost 40 miles. Every time Mark tried to pass, Eddie hung out of the car with Bill M. holding onto his belt. In some cases, Eddie actually made contact with Mark's car, causing him to immediately slow down.

Everything was going just fine, except for one little problem. It seems Holiday Provincial Park was off a side road, not the road we were on. So, when we over shot the side road, Mark did not. We slammed on the breaks and made a U-turn through a closed gas station. We could see his taillights turning into the park about a quarter of a mile ahead. I could only guess at what Shelley was thinking about all this craziness.

After this night, she would not want anything to do with any of us. Maybe I was preoccupied thinking about Shelley, or maybe it was John B.'s car speeding away in the opposite direction, but my mind was playing tricks on me. What my mind saw was a V-shaped entrance leading into the park, and I was going to cut tight to the side of the V. Too tight, I guess, because I hit the curb so hard we were airborne for a few seconds.

We did not even see the four-foot-deep ditch we flew over, or should I say flew half way over. When we came to rest, Eddie and Tom were in the front seat with Suzie and me; we were one big ball of arms and legs. Again, luck was looking out for us, because nobody was really hurt. However, when I opened the door and saw where we had landed, I was not so sure about the luck thing. The ditch on both bumpers supported the car, and all four wheels were hanging in the air, three feet above the bottom of the ditch. This was a major problem not being easy to solve. However, at the time, I think my words were, "Oh Shit! Oh shit! Oh my God!" Just then, we saw three cars turning, one after the other, coming our way. I hoped and prayed they were the rest of the road-rally, and they were. Twelve kids were standing around, looking at a car in the most unusual position I have ever had to contemplate. The group question was, "What could we do about this?" Since my car did not have wings, I thought the answer was obvious. We would have to build a road. Someone offered his or her A.A.A. service. I thanked them, but asked if it would work in Canada at 9:10p.m. in the middle of nowhere with no phone to call them. I looked around and saw a pile of rocks.

They must have been leftover from some park road crew's construction of a nice new stonewall encircling the park's entrance sign. I announced, "I have an idea, let's form a human chain and pass those stones over here and build a road under the car." At first, I thought they were going to run back to their car, wish me good luck, and take off. To my surprise, they started lining up, and in no time rocks were being dropped into the ditch, where it was my job to position them. Having the cars provided the much-needed light to see our work. I did not care I was working in mud; I just wanted to get the hell out of this hole and return the family car in one piece.

We exhausted the extra stones, but we were only $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way done. I did not want to do it, but I told the line to swing over to the newly made wall and to take only the stones row by row, so it would be easier to rebuild. Soon the road was almost finished, but how would we get the stones under the tires? We could not jack up the car because the bumpers were flat on the ground and my jack was designed to work only in the slots of the bumpers. Here's where having three extra cars really came in handy, especially two VWs, for they had the scissor- type of jack. I made a good platform under the axles, so the jack could work off of it and found a plank to distribute the weight over many rocks. We used both jacks on the front and then the back, and it worked like a charm.

Soon, I was driving across the grass and back onto the road. Everyone let out a cheer for us, and to hell with the road rally. It was at this point I wondered where Mark and Shelley were.

They had gone into the park, but never came out. We organized the troops to search for them and fanned out over the dark terrain. I located them sitting in the dark in his car, but the car was off the road and had sunk up to its under-belly in what looked like a swamp. "Where the hell have you guys been for the last two hours?" Mark demanded. "I ended up in a ditch and we had to build a road. But how did you get in there? And I thought I had it rough! Your car is really in some deep mud." "Don't ask! But if you really must know, I was trying to turn around and backed into this mess. How can we get you out of this? "Well, I don't think the stones would do you any good, even if we had the two days it would take to move them," I was trying to make a joke.

Mark was in shock. "What are you talking about, Cook?" he asked. After some thought, I sent some of the guys to find any kind of planks or scrap lumber from the entrance area. With some hesitation, I asked Suzie if she wouldn't mind waiting with Shelley in Mark's car while we went to find someone up at 11:00p.m. "Sure, but can one of the guys stay with us? Like Eddie?" she asked. "No problem, you will be glad to stay with the girls, won't you, Eddie?" I was not asking. We left Shelley looking like a worried beauty queen, sitting in the front seat. Suzie and Eddie were looking a little too happy about this situation, sitting tight together in the back seat. I just wanted to get this night over without any more problems. We didn't have to drive far, about two miles back towards Windsor, and we saw a light in what looked like a farm. I sent Mark up to the door to be as charming as he was capable of being.

In the meantime, I was not going to take any chances of being identified by my license plates. Mud was everywhere, so I grabbed a handful of it and obscured my plates...both front and back. Soon Mark returned and said, "We're in luck, he has a tractor with lots of chain and he is willing to pull me out. I told him to follow us back to the car." My instinct paid off; there would be no way for the guy to ride behind me and memorize my plate number. At least if I stay far enough ahead of him, the mud might not be noticed, and start him wondering why my plates are so dirty. I had driven far enough ahead of "Mr. Green Jeans" so as to talk to the other drivers, warn them off, and send them back to Detroit. It took another hour, but Mark was out of the mud, and he paid the farmer forty bucks. He thanked him to the point of almost seeming funny, like a Three Stooges routine, and "got the hell out of Dodge".

It was 2:30 Sunday morning when I got Suzie home. On the way, it was clear she and Eddie had struck up a "friendship" in the back seat of Mark's car. I wondered what Shelley thought of all this sinfulness.

The next day I got the rest of the story. Shelley's father, the Reverend D. was so worried about his daughter he was unable to write his sermon for the next day or get any sleep. The fall-out of this was his yelling about grounding her, but Mrs. D. would probably intervene, Mark hoped. Sometime before Eddie and Suzie got into "it," Shelley had recognized Suzie as being the girl who had tried to pick up her 14-year-old brother. She had asked Mark, "How does Chip know this 14-year-old girl?" FOURTEEN YEARS OLD!

I felt like I was going to pass out. “Boy, can you pick them, Cook.” He told Shelley I had picked Suzie up on the bus. Now we were going to have a meeting of the B.I.B.C.P. about setting a minimum age limit. “You didn’t tell her I didn’t know how old she was?” I protested. “No, but we’re even with that snowbrush trick of yours.

I think the association of you with Suzie has made a lasting impression on Shelley.” he smiled. “Thanks, Mark. I will have to find a suitable way to repay you.” It took three years, but I found the perfect way to pay him back. I’m not sure it will make it into this book, but you cannot have too wild an imagination. Also, three days later, we found out what became of John B. and his date. After leaving the park, they decided to try and go the shortest distance to Belle River and got completely lost.

They spent the night in a field. I hope it was worth it, because both of them were grounded for a month. As for me, the car cleaned up just fine and my parents didn’t lose a minute of sleep over anything that happened. They were too busy being excited over my niece, Elisabeth, being born. In the end, I bought the car from them, a 1962 silver Chevy Bellaire. They don’t make cars like that anymore. One last point of interest: on Channel 9 from Windsor, Ontario, and a report about vandalism.

The police interviewed a local farmer who said, “...If I had known there had been that much damage, I would have called the police. All I did was to pull a car out of the mud for them. Their cars were so dirty; I could not make out a plate number.

I wish I could have been more helpful.” We were going to go back and rebuild the wall, but thought better of it after hearing the report. His descriptions of us were too detailed to take a chance.

THE PARTY AT EDDIE G.’S APPARTMENT

It was billed as an opportunity to have a nice, safe dinner-party at Eddie’s beautiful apartment overlooking the Detroit skyline. Compared to the unfinished road rally, this sounded almost “Mark-proof.” However nothing could be safe if Mark was involved, as I was to find out. What was not shared with me was the fact Eddie was enrolled in a private boarding school in Windsor. (How he got out was a mystery even to Mark). Eddie’s adoptive parents, Dr. and Mrs. G., were in Florida for three weeks, thinking Eddie was in good hands at the school. Mark’s plan called for all of us to have dates, again. Seeing I was not going to ask 14-year-old Suzie again, Mark decided to take matters into his own hands and set me up with one of his old girlfriends, Mary Williams. I reluctantly agreed to participate, and the party was set for Friday night. I asked what should I bring, but Mark said Eddie had everything we would need. All I had to do was to show up at the Jefferson Towers, Apt. 1706, at 6:30p.m. Mark would pick up both his date and my date.

I reminded Mark of the fact our S.A.T. exams were on for 10:00a.m. the next day, and we needed to make a short night of the party. He assured me everything would be just fine and I worried too much.

On Friday, I drove down to the Jefferson Towers and I was impressed at how elegant it was inside. At 18 stories, its black tinted glass exterior was one of the showpieces of the waterfront. The doorman checked off my name and I quickly found the elevators and was flying up to the seventeenth floor. I rang the doorbell and Eddie greeted me with a silly grin betraying the fact he had been drinking. His parents really had a beautiful corner apartment, with all the outside walls being floor-to-ceiling glass.

Mark's shirttail was out of his pants...his normal disheveled look. Like Eddie, he had a stupid drunk grin. "Cook, I would like you to meet your date, Mary," he said. They had been sitting very close to each other and both had almost empty drink glasses. "It's nice to meet you, Mary. Mark has been telling me the two of you are old friends," I smiled. "Yes, we have emptied a few bottles, we have," she said sheepishly. "And where is your date, Mark?" I asked looking over the other two couples. "Oh, Shelley is in the kitchen, she volunteered to do some of the cooking," he said. I bet she did, I thought. "Well, why don't the two of you catch up on old times and I'll see if Shelley could use some help. After all, we have exams tomorrow, and I can see there is a lot to do here," I smiled, trying to make my escape. The large galley kitchen ran from the hallway to the dining room and had no windows. With two swinging doors, it was a perfect place to hide.

I figured Shelley was trying to do just that. I stuck my head in and saw a puzzled Shelley looking in one of the many cabinets. "So, I guess your dad didn't ground you over the crazy road-rally.

We have not really met before. All my friends call me Chip,” I said with a forced smile. “Mom intervened for me, but Dad was not very happy at all. I have never been in trouble before...”. Do you need any help in here? I’m not very interested in drinking,” I said. “Yes, I could. I have not done much in the way of cooking. This is the first time I have had to cook at someone else’s dinner party,” she laughed. “I’ve had more than a few firsts since meeting Mark. He seems to attract trouble, so life has not been dull. I think of it like problem solving 101; Mark creates the problems and I try to solve them. He’s not so bad if you look at him that way,” I was not sure I believed what I just said. “It is none of my business, but isn’t Suzie a little young for you?” she asked. “Mark insisted I needed a date and said to pick someone up on the bus if I had to, so I did,” I answered. “Do you always do what Mark tells you to do?” she asked.

She was pushing me into a corner, so I ducked the question with, “Live and learn.” I laughed. “We should get serious about dinner, now. Since you like to solve problems, I’ll let you tell me what to do. I think this dinner could be a really big problem,” she said changing gears. “Do we have any idea what the menu is?” I asked.

“Well, I was told to fix anything I could find in here. There are steak tips in the freezer next to some chocolate ice cream,” she said. “Let’s try and find some wild rice to go with the tips, and what do you think about this cream of mushroom soup?” I asked. “That sounds good to me. I’ll set the table for soup,” Shelley smiled with relief.

We were both new at the art of cooking and made some funny mistakes, like thinking we should put butter on the steak tips so they would brown under the broiler. This was before smoke detectors were popular, so the fan helped with the smoke giving us some visibility in the kitchen. The soup was ready before the meat was done and had cooled to being just warm when we finally served it around 8:00p.m.

We hadn't heard a peep out of anyone for hours. We put out the soup and called everyone to the table. I was shocked to see how drunk everyone seemed to be. As we took our seats, I toasted our host, Young Mr. G. Save for Shelley and me, everyone looked confused and tipsy. I started to eat and the others slowly followed. On the edge of my field of vision, Mary weaved a little and looked down into the bowl of soup in front of her. I thought she was studying it, when, all of a sudden, she fell face-first into the soup. I reacted quickly by grabbing her hair and lifting her face out of the soup. Not wanting her to drown, I did my best to wipe the soup off her face, as if this was normal. Shelley was shocked, but everyone else just went back to his or her soup, as if this was to be expected. No one said much about dinner, although I thought the tips were too well done.

Everyone quickly disappeared, just as they had appeared, into the other dark rooms. Shelley and I did our best to clean up. "How long have you known your date, Chip?" she asked. "I do not really know her at all. Mark fixed me up with her. I don't think she is my type, whatever my type is," I tried to sound relaxed about everything.

After cleaning up, we joined the others. It must have seemed like an orgy to Shelly. In the darkness, unmistakable sounds could be heard coming from the bedrooms. Looking like the picture of innocence, Mark emerged from the bathroom and said to Shelley, "You two did a wonderful job with dinner. Are we ready to go now?" "Yes, I cannot be late tonight or I will really be grounded," Shelley said. "Hey Mark. What about Mary? You want me to take her home?" I asked. "She's your date; she will tell you where she lives," he said as if he had not been drinking at all. "Can you at least give me a hint as to where I can find her?" I asked. "I think she is sleeping on the couch. See you at the testing center tomorrow, good night," he said leaving. OK, this is a first! A hide-and-go-seek blind date. Maybe the smell of old cream of mushroom soup will give her location away. It took a bit of feeling around, but I found her behind the couch on the floor.

The problem was, she was so drunk, and I could not wake her up. I tried to get her up to walk, and I tried black coffee. She was so out of it, she thought she was talking to Mark instead of me. How was I going to get her to my car? How would I find out from her where she lived? And how was I going to explain this state of drunkenness to her family? The short version of this nightmare is, I got her sobered up and home, but it was 2:00a.m. before I got to bed. I wanted to kill Mark for giving me a real S.A.T. handicap due to lack of sleep.

I ended up with good scores, but not as good as Mark's scores.

The real jaw-dropper was Ms. Rochelle D. not only aced her S.A.T.'s, but also took the advanced placement scholarship part of the examination and placed number one, in 1966, for the entire state of Michigan. This entitled her to a full four-year scholarship to the school of her choice. She chose Wellesley College for women in Massachusetts.

Later, I heard from some of Mark's other friends, he had hoped to get Shelley drunk at the party, so as to improve his chances of bettering her on the S.A.T. exam. As it turned out, he was dreaming. Shelley was in a league of her own, and would prove to be true in more than one category, and not for the best.

Mark Calls for a Ride

It was the Tuesday after the party at Eddie's apartment. I was tired from studying, and I thought I might get some sleep. Not a chance. The phone rang and it was Mark. "Chip! You have to help me. Eddie's party has snowballed. It has been going on ever since Friday night. I made the big mistake of driving down here, just to check it out. Now I'm too drunk to drive." Oh, shit! "What do you want me to do?" I knew the answer. "Can you come down and pick me up at Eddie's?" Mark pleaded. I should have told him to just sleep it off and drive home in the morning. I wished I had, but I didn't. Like a true friend, or sucker, I drove the half hour to downtown Detroit and found Mark waiting at the front door of the Jefferson Towers.

Mark was even more disheveled than usual, and clearly quite drunk. It was a good thing he knew enough not to drive, but I did not want to be his chauffeur on call either. He got in without as much as a grunt.

I tried to go around the block to get on the expressway, but I was diverted to a very seedy part of town. John R. and Brush were the street names, but they stood for the red-light district of downtown Detroit. I thought Mark was in the back seat getting some sleep, but that would have been too sensible for Mark. As we were driving north on a very busy four lane one-way street, an old white, beat-up car pulled along the side of us and started blowing his horn. Driving was this rough-looking "Hell's Angel" type of a guy and sitting almost on his lap was a gum-chewing blonde with teased up hair. It only took a few thrusts of his middle finger to tell me he was really pissed off about something. "What is the matter with that asshole, Mark?" I asked. "Cook, just get out of here and fast!" Mark yelled with a slur. "Mark! What is going on?" I need to know. BUMP. The idiot had dropped back behind us and was running into the back of my car.

This was serious, and this guy was playing rough. "What did you do to him to get him so mad, Mark?" "I didn't do anything that bad.... I mooned his girlfriend," he laughed. "You stupid son-of-a-bitch, you're going to get us killed!" I screamed. "I'm sorry; just get us out of here, Cook," he didn't get it. In my rear view mirror, I could see headlights coming in for another hit, so I squeezed into the right lane. The car I had cut off was between the "Madman" and us. All the cars were locked in a mass array speeding north.

I sped ahead to lead the pack and tried to find an out. I was hoping I could speed up enough so I could turn left down a side street, without getting hit by the cars to my left, and lose the “Madman” in the mass of cars. (Plan A) I did it, but in my rear view mirror, to my horror, I saw the “Madman” had slammed on his breaks and stopped right in the middle of the street. After all the cars had cleared, he followed my turn and stepped on the gas, burning rubber. (Plan A had failed) He was still in hot pursuit and didn’t seem to be cooling down at all. As I caught up with another block of cars driving normally, I saw a small space to get in between them, and I took it. Again, I worked my way to the front of the pack, and found myself in the same situation as before. (Plan B called for him to try and pull up to me on the right and then to make the same turn left as before, hoping he would be carried off with the mass of cars.)

By this time, Mark had flopped over the seat and was riding in the seat next to me. My plan seemed to be taking shape again, but this guy would have to fall for it twice in a row, and what would stop him from doing the same thing? I didn’t have another option other than pushing Mark out into the street and taking off. So, as Plan B was in the process of being executed, a shot rang out. A streetlight came down like glass rain, just to my right, as I turned. “He’s shooting at us, Cook!” Mark cried. “You must have one of the ugliest butts in the world to warrant this kind of reaction! Why did he shoot out the streetlight? I cannot believe it was meant as a warning shot,” I said. Plan B didn’t work any better than Plan A, and now he was shooting out streetlights and I was running out of streets I could duck down.

The next street was Woodward Ave., still heading N. by N.W., it cuts Detroit in half. Woodward Ave. was going to be rough, with three lanes going one way and three lanes going the other, and traffic lights one right after the other. At first, the lights were helping us, green light after green light. Then we came up to a light just as it turned green. I could see our luck was changing and we were going to hit some long red lights. The “Madman” was right behind us as we hit our first red light. There was no traffic crossing, so I ran the red light. He followed. This happened twice, until we came to a red light with a wall of cars crossing in front of us. He pulled up next to us and started to get out of his car; in his hand was a tire-iron.

The light changed and we took off, but how long could we keep this “cat and mouse game” going? I had to think up a Plan C, and fast. “Oh, shit! We are in trouble now, Cook. Those lights just turned red and look at the traffic, we cannot run it.” No sooner than Mark had said those words, the “Madman” was next to us and was out of his car, standing over Mark, who was sinking down in his seat. With the tire-iron raised to strike the windshield, things were getting desperate.

Don’t ask me where plan Z came from, but in a flash, I threw the car in reverse and started driving backwards, swerving around cars coming up from behind to the light. Lucky for us, the “Madman” was caught off guard and tried to run after us. In a fit of frustration, he threw the tire-iron, but he missed. He was now far enough from his car I just waved, “good-bye,” and turned down a side street.

A few zigzag blocks away was a very large motel, where we ducked in to hide. For over a half hour, we could see and hear the “Madman” driving around trying to find us. After an hour, we drove due west, got on the expressway and went home. The next morning, I checked over my car. There, on the trunk of the car, was a long groove where a bullet had traveled toward Mark’s head. The groove ended at the crumpled metal frame of the rear window. The bullet must have deflected upwards and it hit the streetlight. Once again, some kind of strange luck seemed to be at work. The problem...I was beginning to count on having good luck.

ODDS AND ENDS

The shooting made the risk-taking all too real, and served to slow us down a little. I made one of my calls to Mr. Ed G. I told him I was a sergeant with the Detroit Police Department and we were getting reports of prostitutes coming and going from his apartment. Officers were on their way up to investigate. I guess my call created a backup of naked people running for the fire escape. Eddie’s party continued until his parents came home from Florida and found their beautiful apartment a complete disaster. We didn’t hear from Eddie for the rest of the year. School took center stage, and we stopped with the craziness.

This covers the majority of the mayhem we were involved with, but the B.I.B.C.P. had a life of its own. The “dock rats,” who carried on the activities, did not have our good luck. Eddie G. parents got tired of bailing him out of trouble and, after the age of 18, his troubles got worse. I was driving to Oakland University, and on the news was a story of a large drug-bust in the very classy town of Grosse Point Shores.

I was shocked, but not really surprised, to hear the names of 23 members of the B.I.B.C.P. read off in connection with the bust. Jim M. spent a year in jail for dealing Marijuana, but later went on to college. After a failed marriage to Sue, he married an ambitious lady and ended up making chocolate candies.

Mark and Vida spent summers in The Village, Maine, working at the Riverside Motel. They married and he became a lawyer in Tampa, Florida. Vida became a buyer for a chain of department stores, also in Florida. They divorced after ten years and Mark married a high-maintenance trophy-bride. This marriage lasted a few years. They divorced and he married his secretary. She became a lawyer and had three children, two beautiful girls and her husband Mark. I took the opportunity to remind Mark this was karma for the white hairs he had given to his girlfriends' fathers over the years. And someday, some young guy would knock on his door, wanting to have sex with one or both of his daughters. He did not find the prospect funny. Other than a few occasions when we bored everyone with old stories, we did not have much in common.

So ended a period of teenage stupidity, but a rite of passage all parents hope their kids survive. No one got hurt; Mark and I did not get into any trouble with the U.S. police and my parents slept well. This is what I call "Kissing the Cobra."

(Note: In 1955, there was a television program called, "Believe It, Or Not!" One segment featured was called "Kissing the Cobra." It must have made quite an impression on me; I still refer to it. The camera team traveled to a remote village, somewhere in northern India, to record a strange yearly ritual. The people of the village believed the only way to ensure "Good Luck" was to perform an act of devotion. This act consisted of a ceremony where a chosen virgin, dressed in white, would be led up to a mountain ledge inhabited by Cobras and kiss one of them on the lips, not once, but three times. As the cameras rolled, it was noted last year's virgin did not survive the kissing. I guessed there was a skill to this act needing to be taught to the young girl over the year leading up to the event. The cameras caught the image of the girl in a swaying, in-and-out dance with the large snake. Once, twice and finally the third kiss was planted on the mesmerized snake. The lesson I learned? There is a knack to having good luck. And it pays not to be a virgin, at least in one village in northern India.)

The Summer of 1966

My sailboat, the Playhouse, and Bill were all there in The Village waiting for another wonderful adventure to begin. Grandpa was still taking life a day at a time.

Grandma's ashes were always by his side. Mom's life still revolved around her family. Coe, Jack and Scott were planning to return from Hawaii by fall. Jack had had a grant for Asian Studies. We had plans for other friends to come for short visits too. Norm Fink and his mother Muddie were coming in early July. It was a last minute decision on their part. The cottage was full, so Mom started calling around to find adequate accommodations. As a little girl, she could remember hateful front desk signs that said, NO DOGS OR JEWS ALLOWED. By the end of World War II, these signs were gone, however Mom wanted her friend's to feel welcomed. Dunelawn was where we had stayed and Mom had known Mrs. Smith, so that was the first call. It had been three years since she had launched into me about my giving notice. To my surprise, she was glad to accommodate Mom's friends. "Any friends of yours are welcomed," she said. I guess business was business and her hatred of me did not play a role.

Mom and Norm made an interesting pair. They were best of friends, because of an unlikely connection...Silver. Norm was short and looked like a very well preserved Egyptian mummy. He was not openly gay, but I always wondered about a wealthy fifty something year old mother's boy. I'm sure that was a positive thing for Dad, who was always working, to have him as Mom's best friend. We had season tickets to the Detroit Symphonic Orchestra and Mom and Norman always went together. Dad had a ticket, but often Mom had to find a friend to use it. One evening when both Dad and Norman were there, a nosy woman from the row behind us, tapped Mom on the shoulder and asked, "...which one is your husband, Mrs. Cook?" Without missing a beat, Dad said, "We both are...we take turns." I thought Norm and the woman were going to pass out.

The silver connection was another story. Detroit had a large number of estates to settle; mostly people who had been connected to the auto industry were dying off. That translated to upper middle-income families with assets, which usually meant silver. Basically, it was a tag sale in the original house. These sales were quite popular and the need for crowd control was obvious. As a solution, numbers were handed out at 5:00 in the morning just outside of the house. The lower the number, the sooner you can get into the front door. Only so many people were allowed in at one time.

You could get up to two numbers per person. This was the base of Mom and Norman's shared obsession with silver. They took turns waiting in line for each other. Silver items usually went for a song, but she could resale it at a nice profit. Norm just loved silver and had a ton of it. By 1966, Mom's boyfriend and his mother visiting did not warrant a second glance. However the lesson did not escape me. In the hands of a Devil this kind of "social illusion" could prove to be useful. Sometimes the best place to hide something is in plain sight, letting the viewer draw a faulty conclusion. While Mom entertained her company, Bill and I sailed.

We had checked out the new usherettes and other than our groupie Cathy we were not interested in giving chase. A new car parker had been hired, John. He drove a green Firebird, smoked a pipe, and attended Notre Dame. John acted as if he wanted to be anywhere, but here working with us kids. Cathy saw an opportunity for new meat and start in with John. She saw it as a challenge. John was an observer more than a participant. He summered with his parents on Wells Beach and knew everyone, mostly adults, in the neighborhood. I felt he wanted to make some friends, but he was not sure at first we were the friends he was looking for. We shared a love of sailing, so he would think about being friends. [It took over fifteen years, but it did happen.]

The summer was looking very boring until the new summer people moved into Lloyd's little cottage.

The widow, Mrs. S. had three children. Laura and Les S., her two older attractive teenage daughters and her young son. Bill and I were stopped dead in our tracks and we introduced ourselves. We spoke to Mrs. S. and offered our services carrying in boxes for her. With a knowing smile she accepted our offer. The mating dance had begun.

We did not have horses or hides to offer, but a helping hand was a good start and it gave an opportunity to present ourselves in a good light. We had wheels, which was very important. My sailboat in the Cove did not go unnoticed and summer jobs at The Playhouse turned out to be a very big plus. It seems Mrs. S. was very interested in season tickets. That meant they were here for the summer. I took the opportunity to let drop the Playhouse might be looking for two more usherettes. The trade of information carried with it the added advantage of not having to buy four season tickets. We were a useful source of both work and entertainment for Mrs. S.. She must have had a good laugh at us drooling over her two daughters. Both girls got jobs at the Playhouse, much to the disappointment of Cathy.

We were a foursome and had wonderful times. I had no illusion; most of the attraction Bill and I represented to the girls was usefulness for the duration of the summer. Under normal conditions they would not have looked in our direction twice. All summer romances have an invisible expiration date sometime in the fall. Some of us know this from experience and some of us find out the hard way. Some of us know the situation, but pretend the outcome will be different. I was infatuated with Laura and I was in the last group. Night after night, we would walk down Juniper Lane; turn left on Shore Road and head for our field around the corner. The field was beautiful at night with a rising Moon. It had banks on both sides and a small brook weaving down the center.

If the night got cool a mist came up and formed an imaginative river flowing to the sea. From our location on the side bank it was magical. We would kiss and touch for hours. We marked time by the movement of the Moon.

A cool sweat was both our reward and our punishment. It was common to get to bed around 4:00 o'clock. It was a dance of sorts and the illusion of love was enough. Every partner was different in her own way. I was a different person too. The physical was almost secondary to the dance of the spirit. That is the best way I can describe it. We would go somewhere else and melt into each other. I cannot go pass the field without thinking of Laura. The field was not the only place for love.

At the end of August, Nature put on one of the most incredible Northern Light's displays, I have ever seen. The entire sky glowed in what looked like a moving dome of light pulsating from all horizons to the center above our heads. To this day I have not seen anything in Nature that could equal it. We kissed on the roof under the lights. When we were not kissing, the four of us loved to catch a movie Sunday night at the Leavitt Theatre. Next to the entrance to the theatre was a sub-shop named The Dugout. We lived there. Dining on pizzas and roast beef, pickles and mayo subs, while listening to the fantastic music of 1966.



Les and Laura S. on Juniper Lane summer of 1966

Laura and I had a song, "Oh Wouldn't It Be Nice." However everything comes to an end and our summer did too. My "dance partner number eight was painful to lose. In the fall she went off to Wheaton College for girls. We wrote each other, but the letters came further and further apart. Subject matter shifted from us to Dartmouth drinking parties. By January of 1967, our dance was over.

Mark, John B., Bill G. and I decided to create our own senior trip instead of the traditional trip to Washington, D.C. We traveled to Maine and stayed at my family's summer cottage (no insulation and no running water). To add to this fun, we left Detroit in a blinding snowstorm closing everything in its path, and we fought the snow all the way to Maine. If the trip had gone my way, we would not have stopped but for gas. However, Mark had another idea; he wanted to take advantage of the eighteen-year-old drinking age in New York. I had just turned the "legal age." Albany was the location he chose to make our first great purchase. As the three of us walked around the liquor store like children in a candy shop, the guy at the register was not being fooled, nor did he really care. I would ask Mark, "Do you think father would like this?" as I held up a half gallon of Vat 69. I swear Mark was drooling. "Oh yes, father would really love that bottle." "I think father would like this, too," John said, as he held up his poison of choice. Since I did not drink, we ended up with four half-gallon bottles of alcohol, enough to kill poor old dad.

The drive from Detroit to The Village was 825 miles. Wouldn't you know we got the car stuck at the bottom of Juniper Lane and hiked up the last 500 feet to the cottage? When the storm cleared, it had dumped a foot and a half of snow.

Bill G. lived in Chelmsford, Mass., and he met us the following morning at his parent's house, just down the road. In those days, The Village was a real ghost town, even in early April. However, the ghosts had eyes, and by morning the whole town knew the Cook kid and his friend Bill G. had two friends up from Detroit. India had seen us with her new binoculars, and the phones started to ring. Later that morning, we went to town and were greeted by people neither Bill nor I knew. The Post Mistress told us she got a call about us from one of her neighbors around 10:00p.m. It was clear we were under the microscope and the B.I.B.C.P. was going to have to keep a low profile.

As we left the Post Office, a very old and a clearly demented lady pointed at Mark and started to cackle, "That boy has acne, that boy has acne, that boy has acne." It was a very strange thing to happen and caught all of us off guard. However, it prompted Mark to rush to the drug store and stock up on Clearasil. It was at the end of our stay we got an explanation as to what she was doing by insulting Mark. It seems this woman was a well-known skin specialist and had written many books.

The Village seemed to be where demented people go to spy on their neighbors. Mark just had the misfortune of randomly running into her.

We had our share of fun that week, although always under the watchful eye of India. After finding my nephew's plastic boat, we used it as a sled to make runs down the slopes of Juniper Lane.



Cottage on Juniper Lane with new addition

India called home to report to my mother she was sure we were going to end up in the ocean, but Mom only laughed. Mark, Bill, and John drank a lot in a week, all of them using the cold as an excuse.

We took showers at Bill's house, but lived up on Juniper Lane without any running water. Peeing was easy: we just went over the edge of the cliff after checking for India with her binoculars. Number two took some planning: we each had a different colored bucket and a different place to hide it in the woods.

Mark wanted to meet Laura, queen of the field. I had her telephone number and on a whim Mark called her. Much to my surprise, she accepted Mark's invitation to come to our "party." Laura was no longer Laura and Mark replaced me as a person of interest. It was all a bad idea, but I did not fault Mark. Laura was asserting her independence from the summer of 1966. Years passed and I saw her once for a sail in the summer of 1974.

It had been eight years; she was devastated by a very long- term relationship going bad. Again I was just a sounding board for her to cry out her anger. Not even a hint of my Laura could be found. She was a sad ghost I took sailing for the last time. She did not want help. She wanted to live in her pain.



Spring of 1967, with her little sister Chris far left, Anna's boyfriend Andre is taking the picture. It must account for our expressions of joy.

Senior Year of High School

Mark was Mark, Anna was Anna and school was still hard work and I needed to concentrate on studies. It was a time to close some chapters and open up others. Sailing was still important, but had to be a thing of the summer. Laura, Rochelle and Anna were nice memories, but not part of my world. I had been chosen for Boy's State and Boy's City; both events left me cynical about anything to do with politics. I was president of a few clubs, but my heart was not really in it. For fun, I took a jewelry class and my necklace made it to the national level winning Honorable Mention.

Life was going well. I applied to Oakland University and was accepted immediately. My Senior Prom was a different matter. Everyone I felt I could ask to it was going with somebody else.

In study hall, a mousy girl with glasses had been overhearing my frustration with finding a date for a few days. She came forward and said, "If you cannot find anyone else, I would like to go with you." It must have taken a lot of nerve to ask me. I was sure this was not a good idea, but it was just one dance. How complicated could it be. I would have a little more than a month to ask her out. We could get to know each other and go from there...very slowly. Summer of 1967 was just around the corner and I would be in Maine again.

Judy S. was one of the invisible people as I had been before Mark and Anna. She told me on our first date she had been raped by an uncle at the age of ten. My heart stood still and my knee-jerk emotion was, "How can I protect this girl?" Her eyes were sad for a reason. I said, "You do not have to fear anything from me. I will not ask anything of you. You have all the power on our dates." She cried and I held her in my arms until she kissed me. I could feel a "sea change" in Judy S. She was relaxed and ate up the warmth my body generated. I stayed true to my word and only responded to her first moves. This new power was intoxicating to Judy. "Baby steps" for her were desired, like a child learning to walk for the first time. Slowly, I taught her to feel comfortable with her own body. Anything having to do with my body had to wait. "It was a bridge too far." I could guess why, but I did not ask any questions. She was finding herself and I was giving her permission. A red flag was going up in the back of my mind. I had expected a dependency response to any relationship she would form. I made sure she knew this was a transitional relationship at best. However whatever I said might not amount to much to a needy girl. Some women are taught that men are to be trained and they do not know what is good for them. In giving her the power to define our physical relationship, I may have opened up a door I did not want to open. Transference was a possible problem. She might view me as the only man who can make her happy. I had to keep this in mind and look out for traps. We could not have any kind of sex that could lead to a baby. It was the oldest trap in a woman's arsenal and I felt it coming.



Judy and Chip before the Prom.

The Prom Night was fun and we had a party to go to. As planned, I was off to Maine after an early freshman matriculation at Oakland University for the fall semester. My major was going to be mathematics, because it was easy for me. Physics was to be my minor, because I liked it. The rest of my classes were defined by the requirements for graduating with a BA degree.

With all the pre-enrollment out of the way, I should be able to go straight to classes on the first day. Judy wrote about her new job at a local A & W's drive-in. She said she really liked her boss. He must have really liked her, because by the end of the summer they were engaged with baby on board. I was glad I listened to my little voice. So ended dance number nine.

Summer of 1967

For years nothing changes and then suddenly everything does. Mark and Vida got jobs at the Riverside Hotel. He worked as a desk clerk and she worked as the head of the waitresses in the restaurant. Mark was no longer Mark. He had become Mark and Vida. It made life a little safer for all of us. He needed a keeper and she had the short leash. They shared a corner room in the soon to be notorious help house.

Most of the other employees were Maine kids from way up country. They had never been away from home and this was their time to howl. John B. came to Maine with me and planned to get a job. I was able to get him a job at the Playhouse, but that was not going to be enough. John had another side to him and I could not figure it out. He started to act a little strange and talked about shark hunting with his uncle in California. As his story goes a Great White Shark ate his aunt and his uncle went crazy killing every shark he could and John helped him last summer. No one believed his story and when his Mom came to get him, she said this was John's first time away from Michigan. John leaving was a relief to all of us.

After asking Judy to the prom, I discovered Rochelle did not have a date. With prompting I got John to ask Rochelle to it. For the entire trip from Detroit to The Village, John had to thank me for pushing him into asking Rochelle and he did not stop there. I got the blow-by-blow bullshit of the "kiss goodnight." I should have been the guy to ask her out.

After the Shark story, I felt better about the "kiss goodnight" story. With the decision of Mark, Vida and John coming to The Village, both Anna and Rochelle were interested too. However their parents thought it too dangerous and they were probably right. Anna did fly out at the invitation of my Mom and we had a nice ten days together, but still no dance. Not even the magic field could melt the ice. John came and went, Anna came and went, but Bill was missing in action. Bill felt that he needed more of a job, so instead of working at The Playhouse, he got a job as a baker's assistant.

What was he thinking? Up at four o'clock in the morning and finishing around three o'clock in the afternoon. The heat was a killer too. We were not going sailing very much and that much was for sure. Back at the Playhouse, Rollin Scott, Bill's cousin, was taking Bill's place. The parkers were changing faster than I could keep track. John B. only worked a week. John T. was moved up to working the concession too. New blood was filling his slot and Cathy was happy.

If this all sounds confusing, try living it. I gave up with the usherettes at The Playhouse and started hanging out with the kids at the Riverside help house.

Talk about wild parties, every night was a drinking party. Mark and Vida were like the House parents.

Freshman Year at Oakland University

The Playhouse curtain lowered on another year and the sailboat was put on its trailer and stored behind the cottage. We packed the cars with everybody including the cats and dog and drove the two days back to Detroit. We had the added problem of moving into a new house Dad and Mom had built in West Bloomfield. It would make the commute to school faster, but it was out in the middle of nowhere. Coe, Jack, Scott and baby Liz were building the house next to us. It was a crowded nowhere just the same.

Dad's hard work was finally paying off. Rochelle was at Wellesley College, Mark was at Kenyon College in Ohio, Vida was at Wayne State University in downtown Detroit, Anna and I were commuting to Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. In other words, we were scattered to the winds. It was not an unusual event for high school friends to go in different directions.

Mr. And Mrs. Wilson founded Oakland University in the late 1950s. The property had been their thousand something acre backyard to a house they named Meadowbrook. Though connected to the auto industry, their real money came from Michigan lumber. As if answering a common question, the university literature read, "Far more money was made in Michigan lumber, than was mine in the California Gold Rush." Physically, the campus was just out of sight of Mrs. Wilson's Meadowbrook.

This was a good idea because Meadowbrook's English Renaissance architecture clashed with 1950s modern utilitarian orange brick boxes that clustered in the northwest corner of the estate.

I was not there for the atmosphere; I was there to get a good university education my way. When I say, "my way" I mean I might need a safety net, because of my dyslexia. I did not want any of the distractions of dorm life, I needed all the time I could to study, and I wanted the help, if needed, of Mom.

Being a "commuter" was not the best way to get the most out of a university education, but for me, it was the safest. My first month was Spartan. I went to classes, or the library; and around noon, I went to my car to eat a sandwich I brought with me from home. After classes I would drive twenty minutes from Rochester to West Bloomfield. By necessity, I was what today one would call, a "nerd." I really did not fit into 1967. I did not smoke anything, nor drink. Worst yet, I liked Math and Physics.

Mathematics was my strongest subject, but Calculus when taught by a visiting Professor, Dr. Cock, from North Vietnam created its own problems. (This was the beginning of the worst time period of the Vietnam War and Dr. Cock was learning to speak English while teaching us Math. Not the best mixture for any "soup.") If I was being challenged, you could imagine what the other students were going through. There were four classes of freshman Calculus.

Each class had over one hundred and fifty students and all of us knew we were screwed. Cindy always sat in the area I sat in. We would roll our eyes at each other without saying a thing after class. When things really got bad, she asked me if I understood the subject matter. I said, "Yes. I think? But, I'm not 100% sure."

She asked if I could explain a few things to her. The library had a few sound proof rooms with blackboards where students could discuss things. This became a daily meeting. Then Colleen joined Cindy. Colleen's friend Barb was the next student needing help.

A few others came and went, but I was becoming a natural teacher and it was helping me understand the material better too. Cindy had a boyfriend who was serving in Vietnam and we became friends, just friends.

I seemed to have clicked into a thinking mode and dating was not even a possibility, but teaching three girls at the same time was not too bad. They would eat lunch and play cards at the Student Union and I was asked to join them. It was getting cold eating in my car, so why not? This became a four-year habit. The one little social interaction I would let myself enjoy. All told there were forty to fifty guys and girls who rotated daily in and out of The Game. I never knew but a few of them, because I gave myself one hour per day to play The Game. My studies were just too important. Our final exam was going to be our grade. Talk about pressure! After the exam, I felt like I was in trouble. When the grades were posted I received a disappointing 3.4, or B+. I later realized I had the second highest grade out of my class of over one hundred and fifty people. My “students” received Cs, but they were happy with their results.

Winter break was a welcome relief and Mark and Vida would be back together and wanting to double date. Colleen had a circle of friends, but I did not see anyone asking her out. When I did ask her on a date, she seemed a little unsure about something but agreed.

She brought out a side of me I did not understand. I had not really given it much thought; but when I dated different girls, I was different. Colleen had a lot of friends, but as I found out one-on-one dating made her socially awkward. I knew I had issues with groups of people, because of my traumatic experience in junior high; but I had been teaching Colleen and a few others for months. Her discomfort made me feel like I was on my first date.

After a nice dinner and movie at the Detroit Yacht Club with Mark and Vida, Colleen and I had a good conversation on the long drive up Interstate-75 to her family’s farm in the middle of nowhere.

In the moonlight and fresh snow, the farms were a bright white even at night. Escaping into this quiet world seemed special and maybe a little romantic too. We got out of the car and I walked her to the dark kitchen door. She turned towards me and I slowly moved in for a first good night kiss. I closed my eyes and POW!

I felt pain in my face. Stunned, I opened my eyes to see the kitchen door slam shut and a ghost running through the dark just to disappear into nothingness. I was bleeding from my lip and had a small chip off my tooth. What the hell just happened? It was a puzzling drive home, because I could not understand what went wrong. The same moonlit fields now felt very cold. All weekend I wondered about the date, part of me was mad, but part of me said, "All behavior is caused." I did not think she had intentionally tried to hurt me, but her fearful behavior was strange. Her kiss was more like a peck or a head butt. Monday, a new semester was starting and The Game would be the center of social activity. Colleen would be holding court in some capacity, so maybe there would be an opportunity to get some answers.

First day and The Game was on at more than one table. Colleen was like a bee going from flower to flower. It looked like she might just ignore me by moving around. However she ran up to me in a slightly distracted nervous manor and said, "Chip! Over the weekend I found the perfect woman for you. Her name is Linda Mitz and we went to high school together. She was home for the holidays, but she had to go back to Lynn, Mass. today. She is in nursing school there and she loves The Village. She really wants to meet you." This was the verbal equivalent to Friday's kiss, but without some of the questions. Clearly, I was some kind of emotional hot potato, but why? In Colleen's verbal solution as to what to do with Chip, the real message was clear. Colleen's fear of sex and my being a "good guy" created for her a problem. Her talking to her friend Linda about me, triggered in Linda's mind an opportunity.

An agreement was made and Colleen was off the hook. All this without my input...I had become a slightly damaged "trading card." Sexually, all the bait was presented.

She was "nursing student", "...would like to meet you." and "loves The Village." Colleen even gave me a picture of Linda to keep. She was pretty and summer was a long ways off, so why not let Colleen off the hook. Linda and I began to write each other about our interests. She seemed to have a plan for her life. In Rochester, being a "Mitz" meant a lot. However, Lynn Mass. was another world away from Rochester Michigan. She was doing it on her own and she was lonely. She longed for a piece of Michigan and a New England playmate; in her imagination I could satisfy both.

Selling Sailing

It had been a long winter and Detroit Boat Show seemed to me to be a good way to dream of summer. Like five years earlier, there was a new version of my Pintail sailboat sitting on the floor in the entrance to the show.

Surprisingly, the boat yard selling it was from Walled Lake, a town due west of our new house. I introduced myself to the owner Mr. White of White Boat Sales. We talked about the Pintail as any satisfied owner usually does. He asked if I would be interested in a part time job selling sailboats on a commission basis. It sounded fine to me, so I took one of his business cards. We made plans to meet at his showroom in Walled Lake and he would show me his routine to open and close. In addition to sailboats, he sold DN class iceboats. [The DN stood for Detroit News who sponsored the contest where it was the winning design.] He offered to teach me how to sail on the ice; actually it was part of the job. What a blast! It is only a little different, with many of the same ideas as sailing on water. First, you can walk on water, making drowning very difficult as long as you don't fall through the ice.

Secondly, ice boating is all about speed, so timing is very important. At 60 to 80 mph, a mile that is far when sailing on water comes at you in less than a minute. Thirdly, when running (having the wind behind the boat) on water you let out the sail in order to catch the most wind. On ice, because of the speed, you have to pull the sail in to decrease the drag of the sail. Other than safety issues, like the thickness of the ice that is just about it. Soon I was flying around Walled Lake. I was able to help him a little on Saturdays for three hours and sail at the same time. Walled Lake was shaped like a bent figure eight. Late in the season a hole opened up in the middle of one of the "Os." I thought as long as you sail along the outer edge of the "O", the ice would be thick enough for the boat. For three-fourths of the circle my theory held true. However as I crossed the last one-fourth of the circle, I saw to my horror that each circle had a big blue center. I was sailing across an ice-bridge at 60 mph where the ice was getting noticeably thin. I made it, but I would never do that again. It had been pure luck that kept the boat from breaking through the ice.



Dad and Mom on one of the few times they both went sailing with me on the "Spindrift."

Linda Mitz and the summer of 1968

It was the longest anticipated date I had ever had. We had spoken on the phone and had exchanged pictures. There was little doubt our dance cards had each other's name written on it. For me, it was going to be "dance" number fourteen.

Oakland University had let out early in April. Mr. White had offered me a deal I could not resist. For every sailboat I sold, he would pay me \$200.00. I told him that I would give two hours of sailing lessons away for each boat. Any other sailing lessons would go in my pocket and I would charge \$50.00 an hour. He thought it was a good idea and we shook hands on the deal. He knew that I would work from April to the middle of June at which time I would go to Maine. I did a lot of waiting and reading. When someone stopped and if I were able to paint a picture in his or her dreams, I usually made a sale. North of Detroit looked like a swamp from the air. Hundreds of lakes were scattered across the landscape.

Each lake surrounded by people who would like to be a captain of his own boat. Selling was easy if I could teach them to sail and I could do that without any problems.

By the middle of June, I had made over two thousand dollars in commissions and lessons. Mr. White was worried about my leaving, so I suggested a friend of mine could work from middle of June to September. Jim M. was out of jail and looking to make a clean start and jumped at the opportunity to sell sailboats. I did not know it at the time; but by letting Jim into my world, I was slowly putting myself out of work at White Boat Sales. By the middle of June, I was on my way to meeting Linda Mitz of Lynn, Mass. and Rochester, Michigan in Maine. Linda and I were a good fit. Maybe she was not Miss. Right, but she was a great improvement over usherettes or Riverside's help. She was in love with the idea of being in love. Just about every week, she would come up to The Village for an overnight.

[It is an interesting departure from my story's timeline, but on May 21, 1968, my last lover was born. Her name is Joan R. but our paths would not cross for another forty years.]

The cottage was full and a beehive of family problems. Grandpa was still holding onto life, but required 24 / 7 attention. Coe, Jack, Scott, and baby Liz were a mini-storm of their own making. Just to make things more complicated, at the end of 1967, Coe had talked Mom into buying an "old ladies' gift shop," called The Remembrance Gift Shop. Now the reality of having to operate it was just setting in. In an attempt to help Mom, I did the daily accounting and balanced everyday to the penny. It was a very small operation, but it was an interesting place to start. Besides the former owner had not left, Terry Wakem was there to open up and run the place like he had done for thirty some years. We had it all under control until Coe and Jack started working there. I was pushed out of keeping the books. I had mixed feelings about it. On one hand, I wanted as much time with Linda Mitz as I could get. On the other hand, keeping the books was easy and helpful to Mom. Jack never checked out to the penny.

In fact, I never quite understood how Coe and Jack were able to eat-out every night after shutting down. Mom knew something was off, but to keep the peace said nothing.

Grandpa was easy to take care of, but could not be left for a long period. We all took our turns with him. After awhile I just looked the other way from the gift shop. I had a new relationship to develop with Linda. Between Mark's help house and Bill's house and other creative use of space, Linda and my romance got off to a shaky start. I think the biggest draw for Linda was it provided her with a chance to escape nursing school and Lynn Mass. She loved sailing and we sailed naked.

I had mentioned creative use of space. That requires a little more detail. Our neighbor, Lloyd had the son of his best friend living at his cottage for the summer.

Lloyd could not be there all the time to keep an eye on him and asked me if I could “take him under my wing.” He had no idea that it might not be a good idea for a teen to supervise another teen. I had no idea it was going to be impossible either. Tom was kind of a juvenile delinquent, but no one bothered to tell me that fact. In exchange for me keeping an eye on Tom, Lloyd said Linda could have a room if one was open. It sounded like a deal to me. In no time, I did not know where he was.

When I did find him, he had the keys to another cottage about a half mile down the coast. As his story went, he met a man named Nick at a party who was going to go into the hospital. This man had rented this cottage for the summer and was not going to be able to use it. Tom said this guy had given the keys to him saying at least some use of the cottage would occur. Something seemed wrong about the entire idea, but he had the keys. In one week, Tom had hosted two parties and the place had to be cleaned up. Over one hundred beer cans were everywhere and it was going to take a lot of work to make it as good as new. Bill G.’s sound system and records had to be removed as well. I did not drink, but I did minimize damage of the events.

When Tom, Bill, and I went to the cottage to clean up, there was a big padlock on the entrance. We just kept on driving realizing someone must have placed it there and the situation had changed. That night Nick called Tom and said we were in big trouble. That he was able to get out of renting the house for the summer and the owners had discovered the house in a mess. They padlocked the house and went to the police about the break- in. They wanted five hundred dollars to clean the place up. Nick told Tom to collect the money from all the kids at the party and bring it to him in the hospital. Tom found me working at the Playhouse and told me the situation. [Five hundred dollars then would be like five thousand dollars today.] Tom was in a panic. I had a big mess to try and straighten out. Weighing all the options, only one made sense.

We would go down to the Police Station and tell the chief our story. Police Chief Cecil Perkins listened very carefully to our entire story before saying anything. We handed him the key as proof of our understanding with this Nick. I said this Nick character, who I have never met, was trying to blackmail us into giving him five hundred dollars for clean up. This seemed to have caught his interest and he thought about it for a few seconds. He said, "Nick claims he has no knowledge of who broke into the cottage and he also said he had lost his key at a party before going into the hospital." I replied, "The key has no address tag, how would Tom have known where the cottage was with only a key?"

Also, if Nick were telling the truth, how would he know to contact Tom about collecting five hundred dollars? The only crime we are guilty of was not cleaning up the mess we made and we were on our way to do just that when we saw the padlock. After the attempted blackmail, we came to you for help." I knew blackmailing minors trumped most other charges being discussed and if this Nick was as important a person as I was guessing him to be, a discreet compromise would take place out of sight of the newspaper. My reasoning was correct. Bill got his sound system back and that was the end of the mess. Tom was returned to his family uncharged with any crimes. None of our group was ever charged with anything. I went back to a more or less uneventful summer of sex and sailing. Until a late August night, it was a Sunday, because the Playhouse was closed. Linda had gone back to Lynn for another week of school. A couple of Bill's family members, Bill and I had been playing cards. It was time to go home and we had talked awhile outside his front door. As I started my car, another car started up about one hundred feet up Pine Hill road. I thought the events were too connected to be random. I took off like a bullet and so did the other car. I shot down Shore Rd. to Juniper Lane and turned up the hill. The car was about a hundred feet back, but on my tail. I had to think fast as to what to do. Lloyd's parking lot was empty and I pulled into it. Juniper lane was curved enough to block the view of my pursuer from me, hence me from him.

I turned off my car, rolled out and ran around Lloyd's house crossing in the shadows into my house, which was dark. I could see the car had pulled right up to my car and had turned on his bright lights.

Whoever it was projected a feeling of being extremely pissed about something. He must have thought I had ducked down in the car. My list of candidates only had one name, Nick. Assuming he must be drunk and bent on revenge, I did not feel overly dramatic looking for something to protect my family and me. Dad's broken fencing Epée was in my clothes closet. I had it and was out in the back of the house in no time. The car was now honking its horn. Lights from other houses on the hill were turning on. I positioned myself in the dark where he would have to pass if he was going to invade my house. Coldly, I concluded if he had a gun, I would have to kill him and made a plan. It was not necessary the intruder finally backed up, reversed direction and drove off. Early the next day, I met with Cecil Perkins and told a cleaned up version of what happened. I thought it smart not to mention Dad's Epée. After all, I did not have to kill anyone. That was the end of the summer of 1968, but Linda Mitz and I were a number.

We wrote to each other and the relationship did not die over the winter. School was demanding so much time I could not have been social anyway.

Winter of 1969

Most of my sophomore year were a broken record of sameness, classes, The Card Game, commuting, study, and sleep. For the most part, all four years of undergraduate university from 1967 to 1971 had this tempo...only the subject matter changed.

Except for the first semester, I was awarded the university's Student of Great Distinction. If I was going to go to graduate school my over achieving had to continue.

Only once did I deviate from this routine. In late January while playing The Game, an excited Colleen came to the table with flyers.

Oakland University was sponsoring a trip to Spain. The cost was only \$271.00 for ten days, airfare included. Someone must have made a mistake, the entire vacation, our airfare from Detroit and back, all transfers, hotel room (double occupancy), and food. I had the money. I thought of my poor Grandma and said, "Why not go?" Not getting any argument from my inner voice, I took two of the handouts. At home I placed the two travel information sheets at Mom and Dad's place at the table and waited for their reaction at dinner. I was going, I had already decided.

The program was open to students and their families. The question was, would this deal be enough to break their inertia and start them wanting to exploring the world. It was! The timing could not have been better for both Mom and Dad. Linda Mitz could not take the time away from her nursing program, but she had already heard from Colleen that she and about six other girlfriends from The Game were going. I would be well chaperoned by the clique of seven. They all had either a boyfriend at home or were not dateable anyway. Not that I needed it, but Linda gave me her blessings.

I was assigned a male roommate. Bill and I had never met before our landing in Malaga Spain. At Oakland University, I had been a town crier for the trip and a few people signed up as well. One girl was a model, but not my type, wanted to talk her model sister into going. Bill and I started talking to them at the Malaga Airport only to get a disapproving look from Colleen.

The Oakland Group was to be split into two separate subgroups going to separate hotels. Mom and Dad were in one group and Bill, Colleen and company, the two models, and I was part of the second group. Our hotel was brand new and was at the end of the bus route running southwest from Torremolinos.

Medium sized hotels were popping up all along the bus route between the two- lane road and the Costa del Sol. Clearly, the Dictator Franco had major tourism plans for the area. I had done my homework about this region of Spain and made a plan for what I wanted to see.

Bill was interested in more than sitting around the pool, which seemed to satisfy the two models and Colleen's group. They could keep an eye on each other if they wanted. Bill and I rented a small Seat, a Spanish cousin to a Fiat, and we hit the road. Mom and Dad did the same, but we headed off in different directions. My list included the Alhambra in Granada, Ronda (an old Roman village), Seville, and Gibraltar. From a map, I guessed we could do it in three days, but I learned in Spain a map could be deceiving. We had our adventures in Spain and signed up for a two-day side trip to Tangier in Morocco for \$35.00. The dollar was very strong and this was a deal none of us could pass up.

Summer of 1969

In the spring I had lost my job at White Boat Sales to Jim. He was there for Mr. White more than I could be. I was not upset by the shift of power. I wanted to do more with teaching Math, than playing on the water.

I found that I could earn \$50.00/ hour tutoring Law students who were having difficulty with passing the math part of entrance exams. It was working out for the best. The summer of 1969 would start after a long winter. I was looking forward to some fun with Linda, but I was feeling older. Usherettes and the kids at the help house were definitely getting old. I wanted more time to develop our relationship to take it to a higher level. At least that was the idea.

Life never gives you exactly what you have planned. Grandpa was dying at ninety-two and it had been a difficult trip out to The Village from Detroit we took the trip easy. He was not very demanding and we were able to get good care helpers. Mom ran the house without a complaint and started up the gift shop that she and Coe had bought at the end of 1967. Terry Wakem had been the previous owner, but stayed on to help run it for Mom. I helped where ever I could. Coe and Jack had pushed me out of the shop the year before; it was not of interest to me anyway.

The Playhouse was going to be opening soon and I had a boat to put into the water. Everything was on track for a problem free summer. That is when you have to be on guard the most. Coe and company arrived and the tranquility ended fast. I made myself as invisible as I could, but tried to help Mom at the same time. A few weeks passed and everything seemed normal. Coe and Jack worked most of the time and Scott and Liz played in Narrow Cove.

Grandpa just got weaker. Mom took care of him and I would relieve her so she could go shopping. One morning, I awoke to Mom crying her eyes out in my room. I assumed Grandpa had died, but I was wrong. Between her sobs, she said, "Your sister said, since I did not work at the gift shop last week, I was not entitled to a draw." Something inside me snapped. I shot down the stairs and went into my sister's face and said, "What right do you think you have to tell our mother, who is taking care of our dying Grandpa, she is not entitled to her draw that puts food on the table that feeds us?" Coe had a fighting face and said, "Jack and I have worked extra to cover for her. If she does not work, she should not get paid." I was not backing down and responded, "You and Jack did not put a penny into buying the shop, so again, what right do you think you have in dictating to her anything? Now her color was turning red and she shot back, "Jack and I own half of the business, we have a say in how it is run." "I think you are mistaken, I have never heard or seen anything about the two of you owning any part of the business." Now she was beyond red, "We do so own half of the business.

If we don't we will pack up our car and leave the two of you to take care of everything." "That would be fine with me!" I said. It dawned on me that I should inform Dad as to the train wreck that was happening here.

I drove down to The Cove to a public phone booth and called Dad. After telling my story to him, I had done all that I could do. I had to let Mom and Dad sort out this mess. He said as much to me. He also said call him back in two days and we will discuss the matter.

He called Mom immediately, by that time Coe had gone down to the gift shop to find Jack and discuss the confrontation. My job was to stay away from any fight they might start. Two days later, I called Dad to find out what was the state of affairs. He told me Mom had given in on the ownership issue. Saying to Coe that Coe owns her half of the gift shop now and while Mom is alive she would control her other half of the shop.

When she dies, her half of the shop would be left to me, hence being fair to both of us. However Coe being Coe could not let it go at that. She launched into a tirade about how she could never own anything with me...I was impossible to deal with. Dad's solution was to say to me, "Let this one go, you must pick your battles very carefully. We will balance this coveting by the two of us going into business together on the next project. "What do you want with an old gift shop anyway?" I agreed. Without knowing it Coe had given up any power she had. As in a Greek debate my response would be, "With thy words, do I pursue thee."

Her words were, "I could never own anything with him." Hence no partnerships, so I had already won the future division of power. Within a year, Dad, Mom and I had bought the entire 14,000 square foot building containing two stores and the Square Theatre. We had become their landlord and in the future I would be the landlord and she would get what she wanted, the house on Juniper Lane.

It was fair to both of us at the time, but things can change with time and they did. If the score was to be defined by money, Coe's karmic lesson was going to be a bitch. Otherwise, life was good as long as I could keep my cool whenever I was referred to as the troublemaker of the family. Mom and Dad knew the truth and besides, I had Coe's own words as a trump card.

On July 18th 1969, Grandpa died peacefully just two days before the first moon landing by mankind. However he knew before he died man was going to walk on the moon. From 1878 to 1969 what a world of changes he had seen.

I loved him and he loved all of us. I think he would have gotten a laugh the day the post office called and said, "Mrs. Cook, we have Mr. Walker here. Can someone come and pick him up?" His ashes were sent by third class mail. We would have been able to drive down to Hampton NH and pick him up. We put his ashes next to Grandma's ashes and started a collection. He was not third class to us.

[Another interesting break in the timeline is important here. All summer I had observed a pretty longhaired pregnant girl walking through the museum valley to Narrow Cove. She seemed to be living in Captain Adams' old Cape just across Shore Road. One day I had the opportunity to talk with her. She was the granddaughter of the Captain, so I told her my story of meeting him. At the end of August, I saw she was not pregnant any more, but was holding a beautiful little baby. I asked if I could see her, instead she handed her to me. She said. "This is Melissa. Isn't she beautiful?" I agreed. Little did any of us know that this little baby was going to be like a daughter to me.

Eighteen years later, I was one of Missy's first haircut customers in Wells. She has been the only person to cut my hair since. Over the twenty-six years, we have been there for each other. I do not know who has helped whom more. I could not love her more, than if she was my real daughter.]

Linda and I stayed away from the family. Our lives seemed happy and we “danced” every chance we had. The next winter 1969 - 1970 was about the same for both of us. In the spring of 1970, I was proud of her graduating from Lynn Hospital Nursing Program. She had worked hard and it had paid off. She was going back to Rochester and starting a job in a local hospital. We were going to be spending more time together now that we were not 800 miles apart. After a few months, it was clear something was out of sync. She was growing more unhappy with me going to school and the prospects of me going to graduate school. She was ready to start a life together and I was years away from getting a real job. To make things worse, we were living in a "Mitz" clan. I was Linda Mitz's friend in a family of 38 relatives.

All self made and upward mobile male dominated units looking to Linda to settle down and breed. Suddenly I wondered if I was going to lose myself in becoming a "Mitz" breeder. My hesitation created a constant barrage from Linda of me being not enough like her Dad or why you are not this way. By February, I had had enough and so did she. If I was going to go to graduate school and not stopping to marry her, she was calling the relationship off. That was fine with me! I wanted to just get away, so I started looking at student trips to Europe. I contacted Bill G. and John T. and asked if anyone was interested? Bill was, John was not, interested. It was going to be a Grand Tour of Europe, two months, hitting all the major cities by our own car. Mom and Dad got caught up in the excitement and were going to go too, but in their own car and their own itinerary. The entire trip cost me \$650.00 including a gold watch and an onyx chess set and we all had a blast.

“Dance Number Fourteen”—Linda Mitz

Upon returning with Bill from our two-month trip to Europe, Linda Mitz left phone messages declaring her love for me. I was going to ignore them and head off to Maine, but I felt I owed it to Linda to give it one more chance.

She convinced me that I needed to prove to her that I could get meaningful work and keep at it until it ended. Real life was not working at the Playhouse and sailing all day. She sounded reasonable, so I agreed. There was one big problem; she did not practice what she preached. After I found two jobs in the greater Detroit area, she took off for a week's vacation with her best friend Ellen near Lynn Mass. I would not have had a problem with it, except it lasted all summer.

By the last week of August, I tried to find out what was happening and used The Village as a base. Waiting for me was a fourteen-page "Dear Chip" letter.

Basically, saying she had fallen in love with a Vietnam pen pal and we would not have been good for each other anyway. This was followed by a marathon twelve- hour face-to-face discussion that accomplished absolutely nothing. I filled in for someone at the Playhouse making it my eighth season of work and then left for Oakland University. That was the end of Linda.

It was the end of the summer of 1971. I had survived growing up in and around Detroit, Michigan. In many ways I had been unusually lucky. However, as you have read, nothing paranormal had been a part of my life. I did not know how incredibly detailed the stage had been set for what was to come. I just thought my life was going off the rails.

Linda had talked me into working in Michigan for the summer, while she ended up staying with her girlfriend in Massachusetts. We were done as a couple.

Anna, who I had chased for six plus years, was getting married. She thought a roll in the hay would be a nice farewell gift. I did not agree.

At Meadowbrook, I fell in love. As bad luck had it, or so it seemed, she was not available.

My friend Al and his girlfriend had called it quits. I guessed Sue did not want to go far looking for a new boyfriend. I was her target.

These unlikely events set the stage for a series of very strange events. Events that would lead to “**A Very Strange Life.**”

Surviving Detroit was highly edited (427 pages to 175). Many more stories were excluded. What was included was enough information for the reader to be able to take a measure of the author. No matter how you perceive me... good, bad or indifferent; your understanding of me was the only reason for this book.

A more unlikely candidate would have been hard to find. From normal strange events to paranormal strange events would have seemed impossible to this Agnostic witness, but it happened to me. I did not want to try and tell this story. As a student of mathematics and science, proof is the foundation of our use of logic. However when one observes the illogical, there are only two choices; Ignore it, or explore it. I am a puzzle solver, and I got hooked on trying to explain the impossible. From a normal life of a young man to a crazy set of events that made me a real explorer...

People have asked, "What do you think you went through?"

The Agnostic in me shutters at the answer I was forced to accept.

There exists “an intent”. This “intent” seemed to be focused on educating me, in the field of the unknown. I still cannot understand:

Why me?.

SO ENDS BOOK ONE AND SETS A VERY LARGE STAGE FOR
BOOK TWO “ **A Very Strange Life** “



My name is Cook,... Chip Cook...

Appendix – A Theory about Kennedy's Assassination

In 1963 the official story about the assassination promoted the idea, Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone gunman who killed President Kennedy and wounded Governor Connally. A sniper's nest was found on the top floor of the Texas School Book Depository Building with the window opened and Oswald's old Italian rifle in plain sight. He only had a job there for less than two months. A picture showed him with the rifle and a newspaper showing a date. Only two bullets were supposed to have traveled from the window to Kennedy's open limousine. One bullet went through Kennedy's neck, hitting Connally in the shoulder and his hand, with a little damage to the bullet. The bullet was dubbed, "the magic bullet." The second bullet was described as a head shot that had an unusual need for an explanation. The fake autopsy had been rushed by Doctors who had never done an autopsy before. Pictures showed a head in very good condition except for the fact he was dead. At the time no one knew a film (Zapruder's) of the bullet blowing the back of Kennedy's head off, would surface. This required an explanation that not many people believed and a very lame excuse for the pristine autopsy photographs. To most people it looked like the second shot had been fired from an area called "the grassy knoll". The manhunt followed an unexplained murder of an Officer Tippit. It was assumed Oswald killed him. However, no explanation was found. The look of puzzlement on Oswald's face when a reporter questioned him was too instantaneous and honest. He had no idea what the reporter was talking about. He had been captured in a movie theater. Patrons of the theater said he looked as if he was looking for someone. He never was really questioned in public. However he did make a rushed statement to the reporters..."I am being used as a patsy." Well what else would a guilty person say? However I remembered it for over 60 years. After Jack Ruby killed Oswald, claiming concern for Jackie having to endure a long trial, not many people believed him either. These are a few of the facts that just did not add up.

At the time, I had no idea I would possibly be in a position of putting future pieces together to explain what was really going on behind the scenes. I will outline the pieces I have found:

1) In 1957, I met a soldier named Tom Eli Davis, Jr. on a boat in the Detroit River. It was a setup by him to meet my sister Coe. They were crazy about each other and were married in short order.

2) They went to University of Michigan. Coe was finishing her BA, Tom was just starting his. The honeymoon was over; he dropped out and became agitated.

3) Tom made the claim he was dealing in antique guns. Among his "friends" was a man who ran a strip joint in downtown Detroit, a Jack Ruby. Red flags went up in our family's discussions.

4) My mother and I came home to Tom sitting on our roof with a rifle. When he finally came down, he said he was involved in a gun deal gone badly. It did not add up, but he was getting stranger.

5) I overheard Coe crying to Mom about her being pregnant and Tom was without a job.

6) When things could not seem to be getting worse, Tom tried to rob a bank. He gave the teller a note demanding money and without taking any money, he left. Tom just went and sat in his car for the police to come and arrest him.

7) At his pretrial hearing, it was clear to the judge Tom had mental issues compounded by the fact he was going to be a father with no job.

8) Tom granted Coe a divorce and gave up his rights as a father. After a few months in a mental institution he was released to go back to Texas. We hoped that was the end of Tom. NO SUCH LUCK.

9) In 1961, we got a call from Tom while we were at our cottage in Maine. He asked if he could see his son. We should have said no, but we reluctantly agreed to a short visit.

10) When he got out of the cab, he had been transformed. Gone was his blonde hair, blue eyes and light-skin. Tom wore some kind of foreign uniform, dark brown hair, brown eyes, dark brown skin and had an accent. Crazy is one thing, this seemed too professional. He saw his son for a week, but stayed at a nearby rooming house. At dinner he said he was originally recruited by the organization (CIA) to run guns to Castro. When Castro turned to Russia, he was to work with the Cubans in exile. We did not know what to believe, he could not be trusted. After the week he moved on and all his checks bounced. Mom ended up paying his bills.

11) Twelve years passed, his son wanted to meet his Dad. Coe called down to the ranch and made the arrangement for them to meet. When he came back from the meeting, Coe's son said he now understood why she had wanted a divorce. Again, we hoped that was the end of Tom.

12) It was in a way the end of Tom...the next year he was dead. It seemed he was stealing copper wire and got electrocuted. (This does not make sense due to A) he was too smart, knowledgeable to touch a live wire. B) Many people associated with the Kennedy assassination were later killed by electrocution or auto accidents. The CIA or Mob would eliminate undesirable people via accidental deaths. Tom had ties to both organizations) Coe was invited to the funeral and met Tom's other two wives. After a long discussion, a very strange story was told by his second wife Caroline.

13) It seems the two of them were living in the Dallas area on November 22nd 1963. He woke her up early and told her to pack. She asked why? He said they had to get out of town...fast! No other explanation was given. They were over the Atlantic when the Kennedys landed at Love Field in Dallas. When Tom and Caroline finally landed in Algeria, they were placed under house arrest, on the request of the US State Department. They were out of money and her credit card was maxed out. Her father was an important banker in Connecticut and he had to bail them out.

She told Coe, they had no reason to go to Algeria. They did not go back to Dallas, but instead lived for awhile with her parents in Connecticut. She said, Tom told her "The Organization was going to get him for *something he did not do...*" Also, his acquaintanceship with Jack Ruby still existed. (According to "A Coup in Dallas" Tom and his 2nd wife went to Europe in October, first stop in London, later progressing to Madrid, Spain, then to northern Africa. There are no records of his return to the United States until well after the assassination. However, being a gun runner working for the CIA, he probably had multiple passports and ID's. He could have used them to return to Dallas prior to the assassination and again early in the morning of the assassination. According to "A Coup in Dallas", Tom was sprung from Algerian jail (house arrest?) by an important person working for the CIA.)

14) A few years after Tom death, a book titled **Who was Jack Ruby?** was published. In the back of the book were over eighty names and methods of death for persons associated with the Kennedy assassination. Tom was one of them. These were the very few pieces of the puzzle I sat on for years. Not enough information to do much with.

15) Last year in 2024, I got a call from a stranger named Vicky. She was researching Tom's background. I was the last member of the family he had married into in 1957 and she wanted to give me a copy of a new book titled **A Coup in Dallas**. She told me there was a lot about Tom E. Davis, Jr. within it. It was clear Tom was up to his eyeballs in the plot.

16) The most interesting part to me was Ruby's response to his lawyer's question. The question: "Is there anyone who you would be concerned with testifying against you?" Ruby said, "Yes, Tom Eli Davis!" Bingo...why?

17) Now I was interested. I just happened to check out YouTube for any documentaries. There were two concerning "Death Bed Confessions Connected to the Kennedy Assassination." Almost three hours of information. It was worth the time, more important bits of the puzzle came out.

18) For simplicity I will rename them. The Mob/CIA gun runner/ document forger I will call the "LA man", (Chauncey Holt). The Mob hit man-driver / hit man in training I will call the "driver" (alias, James Files). The two men did not know of each other. For me this fact is very important.

19) I will start with the important facts supplied to us by the LA man. His story starts as a kid on the mean streets of Chicago. He was raised under the influence of the Chicago Mob. In short, he was an underling doing their bidding. Over his career, he did a little bit of everything. He worked for both the Mob and the CIA moving guns around. However he ran a successful printing business in LA. In November of 1963, the Mob tasked him with the job of forging secret service IDs. The problem was the secret service changed colors of their IDs ever few days. He was told to create these docs and make ATF IDs also. He never questioned what he was told to do. Because of his late ability to produce the IDs, he was told to go to Dallas and deposit them in a truck's glove box in a locked municipal parking lot next to what would be called the parking lot behind the grassy knoll. He was curious and had some free time to walk around Dealey Plaza. He was not paid to snoop around, however over the years he met a lot of underworld characters. He was surprised to see a large number of international assassins just walking around. He did not acknowledge any of them. His instructions said if "the shit-hit-the-fan" to go to the train yard on the other side of the grassy knoll and find a specific car and knock on the door. He was checking it out when he heard the shots. Being able to put two and two together, he knocked on the car door. The door slid open and there were two men he had never met. In his line of work, he just followed directions. He handed the men the forged ATF IDs.

After the assassination, cops were everywhere. In time, they were discovered. They were taken in for questioning. Their story was they were undercover ATF agents. In the confusion they were released. The LA man was heading back to LA...fast. In the YouTube documentary, pictures were presented showing the "three hobos." The hobo story was to protect the undercover agents. The LA man was one of them. By itself these facts do not mean much, however viewed together with the driver's story, important pieces of the puzzle of drop out. Also, the LA man Identified Tom Davis, Jr. as being a CIA gun runner. So, on this point Tom was not lying.

20) The driver's story starts out like the LA man's story, on the mean streets of Chicago. He was taken in as a trainee to the Chicago's Mob as a teenager. His friends were Mob associates and hit men. In November of 1963, he was given the job of being a driver who had to go down to Dallas to pick up two Chicago hit men from the train station and follow their instructions.

They told him to drive them to the corner opposite to the Texas School Book Depository. This building was almost in line with the shooting angle assumed by the assassination investigation. They instructed the driver to park behind the grassy knoll and if they did not make the head shot, he was suppose to try. The driver had a special gun of his own making. It was a cut down rifle that took mercury filled bullets. In the documentary, it was chilling just how cold blooded the old driver was. He said the head shot blew the President's head apart...it was an easy shot from the picket fence. An important fact, he saw a wave of people coming up the grassy knoll and he felt he was going to have to shoot his way out. Suddenly a line of men in suits looked as though they were presenting IDs turning the crowd around. These could have been the forged IDs delivered by the LA man. The driver did not wait around. He had a job to pick up his passengers and drive them to the train station. His hit men patted him on the back and told him he had done a good job in making the head shot they had missed.

After he took them to the station he was to go to his motel safe house and lay low for awhile before returning to Chicago. While trying to relax in his safe house, a knock came from his door. Who the hell was knocking? Looking through the door's peep hole, he recognized another Chicago hit man. Opening the door and pulling the guy into the room, he demanded an explanation as to what he was doing there. No one but the Chicago Mob would have known where he was. The guy was freaking out. (This is very important.) "I fucked up! I killed a cop" (Tippit) and panicked. I was called in to do a job at the last moment, but I was not able to get it done. (Take out Oswald in the theater? Oswald was not supposed to be arrested.) Standard Mob hit, to cut the trail of connections. Why was there a need to call him in at the last minute? Possibly, Tom getting out of Dallas and not doing his job. This would be my reasonable conjecture ("The Organization was after me for something I did not do." TOM DAVIS)

21) Jack Ruby was an associate of the Chicago Mob and connected to Tom in a number of ways. (See **A Coup in Dallas**) Assuming Ruby was Tom's handler, and Tom abandoned his role in this carefully orchestrated plot by fleeing to Europe—if the hitman (the one who knocked on the door), brought in to clean up the situation, failed in his task (**eliminating Oswald**), the responsibility would have fallen back on Ruby to eliminate Oswald. This explains Ruby's reason for not wanting Tom to testify against him. Ruby's excuse would be blown up and the trail to the truth would be revealed. This was a plot that possibly would go all the way up the chain, to Vice President Johnson. The title **A Coup in Dallas** is not hyperbolic.

Q.E.D. for my theory, Chip Cook.