

ARCHIE

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GOLD IN THE FIRE

Archie I. Floyd, Jr.

EDITED BY
Stephen J. Kranz

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FOREWORD

ARCHIE WAS NOT who I was seeking, but Archie was who I found.

About two years ago, I was trying to get in contact with Gene Kranz, my father's father's cousin. He had been a flight director at NASA, and I wanted to tell him that I was running for president because I thought he might be able to give me some advice on leadership.

In the process of searching for Gene, I reconnected with my grandfather's brother, my Grand Uncle John "Jack" Kranz. I found my Grand Uncle Jack to be a fascinating guy. He was a Catholic priest for 13 years, but he found the lifestyle was not for him so he left the monastery. In the years following he worked odd jobs in cities all across the country. He eventually moved back to his hometown of Toledo, Ohio to take care of

his aging parents. Lonely and seeking companionship, in 1986 he placed a personal ad in the Sunday edition of the *Toledo Blade*. A companion he did find, but not at all how he imagined.

“Isaac seeks Rebecca having a great love for the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word,” the ad read. Still deeply religious, my grand uncle was hoping to find a wife with similar values. He received fifteen responses and replied to nine of them. None of those nine responded to his reply. Some time later, a copy of that newspaper made its way into a trashcan in a prison just outside Chillicothe, Ohio. A prisoner pulled the newspaper out of the trash, saw Jack’s personal ad and replied. This prisoner was Archie Floyd.

Archie had been in and out of prison his entire adult life. At the time, Archie had felt that his family, friends and even God had abandoned him. Nothing was going right: his underwear didn’t fit, he ran out of toothpaste and, most importantly, he was without a female partner. He wrote to Jack, “You sound like a good Christian man. Do you care?” My grand uncle replied, “Of course I care.” This exchange initiated a bond between Jack and Archie that lasted until Archie’s death, twenty years later.

The pair became friends very quickly. A month after he received Archie’s first letter, Jack visited Archie in prison for the first time. Soon he was driving nearly 200 miles one way to visit Archie twice a month. Jack was nearly three decades older than Archie and was able to give Archie the financial and emotional support that he needed. They were so close that Archie soon came to call Jack “dad,” and, as my grand uncle put it, they “adopted each other.”

About six years after they first met, Jack encouraged Archie to write down his life story. And so, while incarcerated, Archie wrote a manuscript of about 45,000 words. At some point, they got ten copies printed and bound. Given away over the years, the copies have all—as far as we can tell—been lost to time.

Only the original typed manuscript remained in my Uncle Jack's closet. I asked my Uncle Jack if he would send me Archie's story so I could read it myself. So he packaged the entire manuscript—minus page one which had been missing for a long time—and mailed the 196 unbound, type-written pages from Toledo to my apartment in Oakland. I was supposed to sign for the package, but I never did.

A few days after I expected the package to arrive, I received a message online. It was from someone saying that they had found my manuscript. Apparently, someone had stolen the package off my doorstep, ripped it open, found that it wasn't valuable and threw it on the sidewalk two blocks away. A neighbor who I'd never met collected the scattered pages, saw my name on the packaging and found me on social media. Every single sheet of the manuscript was there—except for the previously missing first page—in perfect condition. About a month later, my grand uncle found a copy of the first page, mailed it to me, and I received it without issue. I now had the entire manuscript.

It occurred to me that the fate of Archie's life story was literally in my hands. Archie had no heirs, and neither does my Uncle Jack. I figured that when my grand uncle dies, Archie's story would be lost forever—unless I did something about it. So, I scanned the manuscript, digitized the text, fixed typos, wrote this forward, and self-published the work for whoever will read it.

So I present to you *Archie: Gold in the Fire*. Subtitled as such because, according to Jack, "Archie saw his life as being tried, challenged and shaped by trials." This is Archie in his own words, uncut and nearly unedited. It is a story of struggle and hope.

STEVE KRANZ
Oakland, California
October 2019

ARCHIE

one

RIGOROUSLY HONEST

BLACK MALES ARE becoming extinct.

What a dilemma it is to be of a particular sex and racial group, to write of the same, sharing the experiences of injustice that blacks and others continue to suffer, and yet seek not to be viewed as racist. I cannot relinquish that having a realization of black truths makes me a prejudiced person, any more than recognizing the constant struggle for social, economic, and educational equality in a predominately white society. I have a zeal to speak out for myself and other black males. I am convinced that only in limited areas (such as Atlanta and some areas of Chicago) is there an effective black voice. Speculatively, in these areas are likely books with hoards of information relevant to blacks which publishers refuse to market and print.

Perhaps they consider writing too powerful. Consequently, many blacks, including myself are unaware of black history and achievements, and therefore, don't realize how strong they truly are.

Do not be deceived. Even today racism prevails, sometimes blatantly (as in South Africa), more often subtly (in America where blacks pretend it does not exist). Even among uneducated blacks who cannot articulate their perceptions, the overall consensus seems to be that there is a form of genocide taking place, with young black males having the highest rate of unemployment than any other group, and a life expectancy that is approximately 20 years less than their white counterpart. It would be absurd to be blinded by the small but hindering percentage of blacks that do succeed professionally (typically in sports or other entertainment), because many hold the belief and the arrogant self-sufficient attitude that if they can make it, so can everyone else. These blacks suffer tunnel vision, the likes of which ignorantly conclude that Rosa Parks alone took blacks to the front of the bus, giving no consideration to the movement of many others who encouraged and supported her. It is extremely difficult to be a young black male in America and not be angry or equally racist towards whites. Increasingly, even successful black males are being targeted out of racism and victimized by the criminal justice system. Herein, I present myself foremost as a God-fearing human being, not hating any person or group of people, but often hating things that people do.

My name is Archie, and I am a thirty-four year old black male. I am not a professional writer, in the respect that I have never been printed, published, or quoted in any literary endeavor, though not for lack of desire or effort. Because I am not a professional (which is apparent with my lack of formal

documentation), but a black male writing basically about self, I am more than a little reluctant to write, questioning whether my writing will be cohesive, successful and significant to readers, whether I can be grammatically correct throughout, and whether I can motivate awareness and change for the black male plight. I am equally discouraged with the thought that writing will lay bare my angers and selfishness, overshadowing any stagnant potential I may have. I am reminiscent of past admonishment and punishment for being verbally aggressive, at times causing others to feel threatened, even without the use of profanity. Therefore, I am anticipating condemnation for any aggression the reader perceives in this book, for knowing the society in which I live implies that a socially acceptable black male should be docile and passive in all matters, and I am dubious of being called a fool for my accusations, conclusions, and speculations.

Still, I must write. Even at the risk of failure and disagreement. I must share my experiences, ever hopeful to help another. I must also help myself. I must continue assuring myself that I am an articulate, intelligent, and at times, a devastatingly eloquent black male who has some important things to share. I am no less a frank and rigorously honest person about myself, and I conclude that if my articulation can suffice for a weapon, or my nurturing self-esteem is accepted offensively as conceit, those are not characteristics I want to lose.

This book is primarily about myself, about what I have experienced and learned, to give the reader a detailed disclosure of a down-to-earth black male. This is not a book merely for blacks or black males. The things I will share with you are for everyone, regardless of race or gender, and including the family and friends of those incarcerated, who themselves have never been accused, charged, or confined, but are affected

nonetheless. My convictions about various issues, while I am no authority, may well give insight and benefit to others. With regards to the penal system, for the most part I will specifically address Ohio prisons, approximately the fifth largest prison population in America, and with which I have the most experience. However, it should be noted that such is applicable to other state and federal prisons.

I am convinced that writing this book could well lead to retaliation against me, or God forbid, my death, because of my details concerning prisons. The criminal justice system in this country does not like to be challenged, exposed, or questioned in any manner, giving a clear message of *noli me tangere*. Be attentive in the future to the fact that consistently whenever an individual has an occasion for a lawsuit against the government, or in any way attempts to perturb the wrongs in the system, that individual is subsequently publicly accused or arrested to discredit or cast doubt upon them. As well, I would like to offer an indigent person (especially those with ineffective court-appointed attorneys) some pretrial insight from my own experiences. To do so may provoke a more thorough challenge to the courts in its future disposition and conviction of cases, taxing them financially and justly.

As I begin this writing I am presently incarcerated at the Madison Correctional Institution in London, Ohio. In fact, I have been in and out of jails and prisons all of my adult life. Up until my last conviction in 1986 for burglary, all my prior offenses have been auto-theft related. I have no criminal record of violence or weapons. At seventeen I was in a youth facility in South Carolina, and, at nineteen a federal prison. I am by no means proud of my criminal past, but I have come to learn and accept that I am and have been as much a victim as anyone I have ever been accused of having victimized. Like

the Apostle Paul, I too am chief among sinners, and I readily concede that preceding my 1986 conviction I was little more than a liar and a thief.

two

IMPETUOUSLY SEEKING WORTH

MY EARLIEST MEMORY of childhood is vague, of my older brother Paul and I living with my father's parents in Anawalt, West Virginia, where I can still smell the odor of feces (perhaps my own) in a very warm house, and feel the love of my grandmother. My clearest memory is of Paul and I living with my mother's parents in an equally small West Virginia town called Coalwood, though even that memory is interrupted by the vaguely uncertain memory of being with my father in a ghetto apartment on Hough Avenue in Cleveland, Ohio where he burned me on my penis for playing with fire. In Coalwood I can remember rock candy, the wood-burning stove and Paul's responsibility to get it started each morning, the outhouse and the slop jars we used in the house at

night, the hills and winding roads of West Virginia during our travels, and my grandfather's pink 1957 Desoto with its push-button gears. I remember the time he shot a water-moccasin off a tree branch hanging over the creek flowing through the back yard that had frightened my grandmother, the times she would wait until my brother and I were bathing together in the big metal washtub to whip us for "the old and the new," and those many times we were given potted meat sandwiches for our school lunches that were hard and stale by noontime. I grew up to hate potted meat.

I also remember a family named Kennedy who lived across the street from us in Coalwood, and were rumored to have the only indoor toilet in town. They had a son named John who once stepped on a nail that went through his foot while coming down from a ladder, and as I got older and became aware of the late President Kennedy, I often wondered ridiculously if they were one and the same.

In the early 60's my father came to Coalwood for Paul and I, taking us to Cleveland where I was hopeful to meet and be with my mother, whom I had absolutely no recollection of knowing. I distinctly remember that day because upon arriving, my father carried me into the house because I had fallen asleep during the trip and was still groggy. It is the only time that I can think of that he embraced me outside of a perfunctory hug.

Unfortunately, the mother I met was not my real mother, but my stepmother, Clementine, whom my father had married and fathered my two younger half-sisters (Darnella and Linda) with. Clem, as she was called, also had three daughters and a son by two other men prior to meeting my father. Their names were Charlotte, Jeffery (my age), Donna (Paul's age), and the oldest Teresa, whom we called Terri.

It was difficult for me adjusting to living among a family of

ten, having to constantly vie for my father's attention, which I sought so badly. Clem was unable to work because of heart problems, undergoing several open-heart surgery operations. The only income in our household was that earned by my father at a Cleveland iron foundry. At times there was little money, and often little to eat, but we never went hungry.

My siblings labeled me a "crybaby" as a result of my crying at the least provocation, and it seemed as though Paul often took sides with them against me. I suspect that I had emotional problems, perhaps from not knowing my mother, and if so, my immediate parents were not educated enough to recognize the signs, or too consumed with other worries to care. When I did get my father's attention it was because of my behavior, or to direct me to chores around the house, including the maintenance of the pens where he kept his hunting dogs, primarily bassets and beagles. I recall with fondness a beagle we called Brownie, and had for a long time.

My father loved to hunt, and consequently, there were good times for all of us, such as going on hunting trips, learning to skin and clean rabbits, squirrels, pheasants, groundhogs and turtles, which we also ate. He was the kind of man who would barbeque a whole hog or goat and invite the entire neighborhood to participate, and under his watchful eyes we learned to make our own ice cream. There were many weekends that after a few drinks of gin, he would play his blues and religious albums, and it was at those times when he was most peaceful and loving.

Even before I learned to steal, theft was a big problem in our home. My father habitually bought snack cakes or other food items that he stipulated were for his work lunch, and usually those food items would disappear, provoking him to command us all to our rooms without supper or play until

the guilty person confessed. The normal course of events had everyone pointing fingers, producing alibis, and denying guilt until in a short time I was persuaded by the majority to sacrifice for all, with me ever succumbing, hopeful to be accepted into the fold and win their forgetting that I was a crybaby. It only led to my getting a severe beating with an electrical extension cord or “switches” (small tree branches shaven clean). I never did earn the respect of my siblings.

Neither did I have the respect of other children in our neighborhood that we played with. They too knew me as a crybaby, and belittled me with fervor. Still, we played the usual games that are traditional in poor black communities, including “any bounce,” “dodgeball,” and “hide and go get it” (sexual). I was even able to fashion together and maintain a bike from salvaged parts garnered throughout the neighborhood. There was also the unique game of “scramble” that we played, as benefits of being first floor tenants in a two family home on 83rd, between Quincy and Central. The upstairs owners (who Terri and Jeffery worked for doing odd jobs such as washing dishes and emptying the trash) were involved in drugs, and often had a guest who would stand on their front porch opening rolls of coins, tossing them down to the yard below where we kids scrambled to get as much as possible. This guest, whom we knew as Fred, would dress up as Santa during Christmas, complete with gifts for our family. In the late 60’s, with my father having been warned of a pending raid upon the place, our family moved to a rented one-family home just down the street between Central and Cedar.

I was attending Washington Irving, an elementary school nearby, and I was truly a good student who learned fast, though on the way to school each day I fell in with some other kids to steal dill pickles from a factory between home and school.

It was not long before I began stealing candy and snacks from the corner candy store near school, and when I was eventually caught, not only did my father whip me, but he also had all the evidence he needed to convince himself that I was indeed the culprit stealing his lunch snacks all along. And though there were gangs in those days (mainly a family group of brothers), I was never involved, and their speciality was limited to extorting the lunch money from other kids.

A great deal happened in my life when I began attending Central Junior High School. I think desegregation was in effect then because Donna and Paul, while only a grade ahead of me, attended another junior high, while Jeffery and I went to Central. One thing that he and I had in common was “rocking” or “bumping” on the couch, at times clutching a pillow. I have heard it equated with feelings of being in the womb. He and I could rock for hours. We also walked to and from school, a considerable distance from our home, and I can remember being very envious and resentful of those kids whose parents took them to school and picked them up each day. In particular, I was jealous of a good-looking light skinned black guy named Earl. He wore the latest fashions, and it seemed that virtually every girl was attracted to him, which I attributed to the clothes he had, and reasoned that he was truly loved. I hated it that my parents could not afford better clothing for me. I was convinced that they just did not love me.

It was at this time that Clem died, and the effect on our family was plain ugly. As soon as she passed, Terri, in addition to expressing her dislike for my father by cutting the zippers from all his dress slacks, instigated Clem's other children into following her in moving in with their grandmother. Shortly after that Terri got married, and although we all visited each other from time to time, what closeness we had as a family was

forever lost. Terri has since remarried and been a long time employee in a Cleveland suburb. With her first husband I smoked reefer and traveled to Warren, Youngstown and other parts of Ohio on weekends to sell the meat that he brought in bulk quantities and then had cut up into steaks. Donna went on to have a number of kids, never marrying, living on welfare, and now her oldest daughter of about fifteen has a child. Jeffery has been in prison once that I know of, but otherwise he has lived as a virtual bum all his life. Charlotte disappeared a long time ago, rumored to have moved to Arkansas. With the exception of her, I have been able to infrequently keep in touch with everyone, though not by reason of any of them seeking me out. I did not attend Clem's funeral. She was a good woman.

It was in 1969 that Clem died and we moved further uptown to a four-bedroom one-family home on 144th Street, between Kinsman and Bartlett. Not long after her death my father began dating a single mother of two small boys, who lived just a few houses away from the one-family home we rented on Central. It was with the help of his new girlfriend, Virginia, that my father was attempting to buy the one-family home which had been built and lived in elsewhere, then literally moved next door on an empty lot beside an apartment building where coincidentally Virginia's very attractive sister lived with her three very pretty children. Both Virginia and her sister were light enough to pass for being white. Virginia also is very attractive, and works still at a local television station. I deeply resented having to babysit Henry, and Stephen who was a year younger and still in diapers, for Paul and I were already burdened with the many chores my father gave us to do, including looking after Darnella and Linda. Our moving also led to my being transferred to a new junior high school

and finding a new friend named William who lived in the apartment building next door with his deeply religious aunt.

William was the first true friend I ever had, and even more so because Paul did not like me tagging along with him and those he considered his friends, even though they lived on our street, attended the same school as I, and were really my friends also. Surprisingly, it was with some of our mutual friends that I first began smoking marijuana, and continued to do so regularly with William. I cannot recall William ever going to school, but together we got high, listened to music (mostly War and The Funkadelics), talked of girls, careers, and making a lot of money selling reefer. Once we were caught by police in Shaker Heights, a Cleveland suburb, for trying to steal some ten-speed bikes. Years later I was to lose his friendship after having been invited to his girlfriend's apartment where I stole his watch, and though he knew I had done so, he could not actually prove it. I had not had sex then, and envied his having a relationship with a girl.

I really do not know when I began stealing from family and friends, or why, but it became a habit, and when I began smoking reefer the money I stole often went towards buying it. I was never very good at managing money, losing a paper route for that reason. Neither was I the type of kid to save or sacrifice, but rather, I immaturely wanted what I wanted when I wanted it. I recall once I stole ten dollars from my aunt's purse while she visited, and my half brother Ricky, who is older than Paul and I, and raised by my father's parents early on and my aunts later, caught me with the money. I got a terrible whipping that day.

I did not come to know Ricky until later in life. He had a different mother than we did, and while he did not actually meet her until later in his adult life, I know that I always felt

that he was spoiled, more loved, and better off having been raised by my father's parents. Unfortunately, we have never gotten close, nor did I feel any closeness with any of my father's relatives, who all seemed to be in competition with one another about who had the best kids, the most money, the best home and cars, and other material things. I did not get to know my grandfather very well either, but I did visit him when he moved to Cleveland. He died in his late 80's while crossing the street from my Aunt Ellen's home to visit his girlfriend.

I began stealing change from Virginia's coat pocket, which she hung in the downstairs closet each day she came home from work. At first I thought that she would not miss it because I never took it all, but as time went on, I began stealing more and more, and at one point stealing as much as forty dollars. I just knew she had to realize that money was missing, but I was never approached or questioned about it. I also stole from and broke into the houses of friends who lived on our street. I had a lot of fears and resentments during this period of my life, and it was people whom I envied or just did not like that I stole from. I felt that everyone unjustly and unfairly had more than I. I felt justified in stealing from Virginia after my father once tried to whip me for something, and running through the house trying to get away from him, I ran through the kitchen where Virginia burned me on the chest with a two-pronged fork she had been using to cook chicken, in an attempt to stop my running. I called her a bitch and my father kicked me out of the house that day.

I was very intimidated by girls, feeling that they would reject me for not having better clothes, and not having a car to drive, which some kids parents were letting them do. I began smoking cigarettes prior to smoking reefer, mainly because it was considered "cool" and all the other kids were doing it. I

did have a girlfriend for a brief time while attending Hamilton Junior High School, but it ended shortly after she got hit by a car while on our way to school, as I stood helplessly watching. In my one year of senior high (John F. Kennedy), I met a girl name Sherry with a sexy overbite, and an overprotective mother. I never really got close to her for fearing the gang of another guy who liked her. Then there was a time that my father kicked me out of the house, and feeling compassion towards me, a family across the street from us who had a niece name Wanda living with them took me in. There was a lot of drinking and smoking reefer in the home, and at one point, even Jeffery moved in. He and I both liked Wanda, but she was hung up on some guy name Johnny, who was older, had a car, and more experienced with girls I am sure. I did learn later that Jeffery had been having sex with one of her aunts, and had even fathered a child with her.

My problems and insecurities repeatedly provoked my father to kick me out of the house, in addition to those few times that I ran away on my own. He eventually got fed up with my cutting school and lying. What mattered most to me was being accepted by others, and that led me into riding around smoking reefer or drinking at someone's home when I should have been in school. I was very concerned about being cool. My father eventually took me to the juvenile authorities who persuaded him to send me to Job Corps in San Marcos, Texas, where even though I missed home, I was still able to get reefer, and had fun sneaking into town by walking the railroad tracks. I got involved in a building maintenance program there which I did not complete, but I did earn my GED, or so I thought. When I left Job Corps I learned that Texas was at the time one of only one or two states that required a 35.0 average to obtain the GED. I scored above that, but not the 45.0 average required by other states.

After Job Corps I went back home optimistic that not only was I better, but that things would be better at home. My father, however, had no patience with me, especially when it came to getting on me about finding a job, to pay my way. He said that I did not actively seek work, but merely laid around the house all day. Paul had already entered the Army, and this only showed my father what a bum I was to be doing nothing. I had worked intermittently, once for a janitorial service that fired me after the first night's work at a beauty parlor, because of my stealing money from the cash register. Another time I worked at a private club in downtown Cleveland, but was fired from there for being suspected of stealing from employees' and patrons' lockers. After he kicked me out, I was back in the streets stealing what I could, to eat and get high, sleeping in empty cars.

In the summer of 1974 he had me committed to a boys institution here in Ohio for being incorrigible. It was just a few months before my seventeenth birthday, and my resentment towards him grew. I was convinced that I only wanted to be accepted and loved, and that no one truly understood me or wanted to. I felt that no matter how hard I tried to please my father, that I could never live up to his expectations of me. I know now that I was simply immature, and especially so emotionally. I also had to accept that outwardly, my father was just not a loving man. Often I would wonder how much better a person I could have been, and how much better my life could have been if I had known my mother and she raised me. The one time that I did get the courage to ask him about her, he responded that "if the bitch would have wanted you, she would have kept you in the first place," and that burned itself onto my heart. I felt all the more unwanted and unloved. He never talked about her, and amazingly, Paul never asked

about her, and did not seem to miss her as I did. There were times when my father would drink and proudly share with us that we had a sister named Celestine, and we simply assumed that she was with our mother. He never offered any details or elaborated, and neither did his sisters share very much about his past, though I did learn from several private conversations that I overheard over the years that my mother might be living in Bluefield, West Virginia, and at another time Yonkers, New York. Otherwise, the only information I had about her was that her maiden name was Wanda Lee Marshall, that she was twenty-eight years old when she bore me, and apparently, she did not want me. Most of that information I got from my birth certificate, and the latter is deduced.

Not liking the boys institution, I eagerly sought a way out. Previously, I had tried to enlist in the Marines (which I considered very manly, and above all I wanted to be a man), but I was rejected with them because of my admitting that I had smoked marijuana. I then decided that I would try to enlist in the Army, mainly to get away from the boys institution, but also thinking that I would visit Germany where my brother met, married, and fathered a child with a white German girl. He later returned to the States without his wife after finding her in bed with another man. I grew up to be amazed at his ability to win the love and affection of women. When in high school he had a girlfriend named Denise who was literally like a slave to him. He was even allowed to drive her new car with the approval of her parents and ours, but later he tore it up in an auto accident. Still she worshipped him. My father treated us both equally when it came to driving his car. It simply was not permitted, though for a time I would anticipate his going to work on cold winter days, and with his permission, warm the car up and back it to the end of the driveway.

I entered the Army a mere eleven days after my seventeenth birthday, with my father's signature, and my every hope of pleasing him and showing him the man I was. I did my basic training at Fort Knox, Kentucky, experiencing the best physical shape that I have ever been in. It really disappointed me that no one attended my graduation. Afterwards, I was transferred to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri for my Advanced Individual Training (AIT) as a field wireman. At a store in Waynesville, Missouri, a town near post, I bought my first suit, a gray corduroy three-piece. I was given the standard leave after basic training, and went back to Cleveland to visit my family who seemed proud of me, and I was reluctant to return to base, feeling that my finally being accepted at home would be messed up if I did so. When I did return, it was to discover that my locker had been broken into, and among other things, my new suit was missing. I quickly lost all enthusiasm for training and arranged to transfer to Fort Lee, Virginia for a new AIT as an equipment storage specialist, however, not long after my arrival I met a corporal who was older than I, and he had his own car that we rode around in smoking reefer. We visited various private clubs, in addition to the military club, and yet I always failed at winning the lasting attention of any female. We often invited ourselves to parties at the Virginia State College campus, and I became aware of other drugs, and of people dealing them in large quantities, including the corporal.

One night, after riding around drinking and smoking reefer he gave me a large package from under the hood of his car, which he asked me to keep until the following morning. Drunkenly, I entered the barracks and because of circumstances that I have since forgotten, I was unable to keep the package in my own locker. So I approached a vaguely known

guy to keep it for me until the next day without telling him what the package contained. I awoke the next day to be told that someone had broken into his locker during the night and stole the package. Being afraid to face the corporal, I went AWOL, returning to Cleveland where I stayed with my father for more days than I could honestly justify such a lengthy time away from post. I began living in the streets again, sleeping in abandoned cars, stealing CB radios (chicken-snatching) and AM-FM cassette players from autos on the street in Shaker Heights, and at used car lots. I found it very easy to break into a car with an ordinary coat-hanger. Within a few days I was arrested for a misdemeanor charge which led to the police discovering that the military was searching for me. They turned me over to the Army and I spent some time in a military stockade before being court-martialed, given an honorable discharge without benefits, for having served in the Army less than 180 days, not counting the time I spent AWOL. Off the records, it was shared that I was too immature for military life.

Humiliated, and having no place to go, I began hitchhiking south, getting as far as Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. For a few days I was forced to sleep outside near the beach and hidden by some bushes before two young white guys living in a motel room in the city of Dania took me in. When they moved on a few days later, I kept the room, renting it with the booty obtained from breaking into homes and cars. While in Florida, I smoked angel dust for a first and only time, got busted and sent to a juvenile center for loitering in Miami Beach, and had the experience of a young woman with blotched skin leading me into a vacant building on the pretense of finding someone, and I was too naive and young to realize until afterwards that she had been trying to have sex with me. I also stole an all white 1965 Cadillac from a service station, and drove about

town for two days as if it were actually mine, before heading north and having to abandon the car on the Boardwalk at Daytona Beach after being frightened away by police who searched me for drugs. Then I hitchhiked to Georgia where I stole a .38 caliber revolver from an auto that I suspected belonged to a police officer, but fortunately hiding it in some bushes prior to being arrested in Brunswick, Georgia on another misdemeanor charge that has since been forgotten. I served a day or so in jail, got out and retrieved the weapon, and sold it in a rural area while still in Georgia. I traveled as far as Anderson, South Carolina where I was arrested for breaking into a number of cars parked at a motel parking lot, subsequently being arrested, charged, and convicted, receiving a one to five year sentence under a youthful offender act, and starting my felony criminal record.

three

LEGALLY VICTIMIZED

AMERICA IS THE world's police.

In this day and age the news is filled with tales of conspiracy, drug dealing, embezzlement, espionage, extortion, fraud, gambling, insider trading, lawsuits, molestation, rape, smuggling, theft, and a multitude of other violent and non-violent crimes. The U.S. has roughly 70% (750,000) of the world's attorneys, and there are approximately 18 million new lawsuits filed each year. Our young have become versed with the commonplace language of arrest, conviction, and imprisonment. It's like one big party of lawlessness where everyone is participating either by behaving criminally, or policing and investigating even the most trivial allegations or suspicions, even against our own neighbor, to the point where privacy is almost non-existent,

as we have moved steadily from wire-tapping to sting operations, to our freedom being subjected to the demands of bodily analysis. You may as well accept that it is not going to get any better.

So consumed with a police mentality in this country, we respect no boundaries, prosecuting leaders of other countries such as Ferdinand Marcos, and forcibly extraditing Manuel Noriega for alleged criminal acts, for which the media and government have predetermined guilt before trial. We watch idly as President Bush concentrates on foreign matters, forsaking domestic policy with regards to unemployment, abortion, health care, and taxes, but not with deference to policing and imprisoning, all to get tough on crime, of course. We give approval by our inactions as law enforcement not only tempt criminal acts, but actually force it on persons, justifying themselves under the term "sting operation." With only token objection we watch as representatives of the people in government compliment the rich and slowly rewrite the U.S. Constitution set down by our founding fathers, seemingly in an attempt to give those with power, more power, particularly in methods of obtaining evidence, and defecating all over the Bill of Rights and a person's right to bear arms.

Clearly, there are double standards in the criminal justice system with consideration as to guilt and innocence, and sentencing, supporting the view of justice being determined by community standing, by the worth and monetary value that criminal justice representatives place upon an accused. Unquestionably, the reality is that with the exception of well-publicized cases, and cases involving violence, such as rape, murder, and dismemberment, all other persons lacking money and often true and caring love, fall victim to a criminal justice system with *carte blanche* to do what they will. Inter-

estingly, it is not uncommon for a manufacturer to be liable for a faulty product, or a doctor and other professional sued for malpractice, improper service, or misrepresentation, but rarely will one attorney sue another. Perhaps it is time to seriously consider the validity of the old clichés of “if you take all the guns away from crooks, only the crooks will have guns,” and “absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

The criminal court system in this country, its judges, lawyers, and prosecutors have become masters in the art of coercion. Surely it is relevant and worth contemplation that the majority of criminal cases resulting in conviction are a direct result of plea agreement, the concept of a defendant admitting guilt in exchange for a lighter sentence or additional charges against the defendant being *nolle prosequi*. For those people who complain about plea agreements and criminals getting off with short sentences, they need to know that plea bargaining in its totality benefits the prosecuting government, not the criminals. The courts coerce and encourage plea bargaining as early as the time of arrest or indictment, where an accused is charged with a greater degree of felony, or more charges than are warranted. Plea bargaining is severely abused and yet continues to function due to an accused person's lack of education and knowledge concerning the law.

Prejudicially, the courts frown upon and discourage the efforts of “jailhouse lawyers” (those with knowledge of the law but not professionally schooled at law and/or accepted at the bar), justifying the prosecution's own criminal and unethical actions by claiming that ignorance is no excuse for the law. They also know that if the majority of defendants began insisting upon exercising the right to a jury trial, the criminal justice system would subsequently fold forthwith. The courts have now gone so far as to interfere with a defendant's right

to choice of counsel. It is not unusual that a defendant who does insist upon a jury trial is blatantly threatened by an irate court with the imposition of the maximum sentence allowable prior to, and if the defendant is found guilty. In essence, punishing the defendant for exercising his rights, and indicating a refusal to consider leniency regardless as to any favorable circumstances to the defendant that may be revealed during such a trial. Blacks in particular, as well as poor whites are left to rely solely upon the often improper advice, self-centered encouragement, and disguised coercion of the court-appointed attorneys who are paid a minimal set fee by the prosecuting government to defend against the prosecuting government. Logically and realistically the court-appointed attorney's loyalty lies with the prosecuting government. These attorneys' minimal interest in properly and effectively defending an indigent person's case becomes apparent when the additional factor is considered that such an attorney's set fee is minute in comparison to the fees charged and earned from non-indigent clients. The obvious consequences of this results in court-appointed attorneys anxious to dispose of indigent cases as soon as possible, that they may apply their energy to paying clients.

We see a heretofore unbeknown Bernhard Goetz as a vigilante shooting people on a subway and receiving a virtual slap on the wrist, while a well-known James Brown is treated severely. We see the power and influence of William Kennedy Smith and his trial for sexual battery (rape, but in this case the wording of sexual battery is an appropriate misnomer for political expedience) stayed from prosecution until long forgotten from memory, while his young black counterparts, no matter how well publicized are prosecuted swiftly and brutally. Poor people of all colors see the correlation of injustices between wealthy and poor. We turn a blind eye to a judge who can

have several martinis with his lunch, returning to the bench to impose a stiff prison term on a drug user. We will fight for and encourage democracy in virtually every country in the world, but refuse to voice as thoroughly the injustices taking place in South Africa. If we are not part of the solution, we are part of the problem. Let our own conscience convict us.

Law enforcement has become so inconsiderate and out of control that in 1991 a nine-year-old girl in Thonotosassa, Florida named Tammy Toloff was arrested, handcuffed, and fingerprinted. Why? For throwing rocks at a thirteen year old playmate. Obviously, the effects of how she will perceive herself now, and in the future were not to be considered.

In July of 1991 a black Toledo, Ohio police officer was filmed by hidden camera at the booking desk in the county jail. There, he punched a handcuffed white male of nineteen in the face while he was being booked on misdemeanor charges, and, as one or more sheriff's deputies looked on. We are ostensibly appalled at the beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police officers, and the obvious increase in police brutality claims, and yet, in the former case, there were onlookers who had the power of arrest and knowledge of criminal law violations. It is therefore bewildering why the onlooking sheriff's deputies did not immediately arrest and book the black officer for what clearly was an assault. It is professionally irrelevant in his capacity as a police officer to justify his actions by claiming he was verbally provoked, for such is to be anticipated and expected in dealing with the criminal element, where some criminals may well be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

A similar question applies in the Rodney King case. The pertinent question is why the onlooking officers did not promptly subdue and arrest those officers clearly violating the law. To not do so sends a searing message that those with pow-

er and authority are immune from swift justice. No new laws or inventions giving police more power in dealing with crime and criminals will have any impact on police brutality or gross injustice, as long as the psychological effects of power and authority granted to the unlearned in interpersonal relationships is not addressed. There is certainly nothing new about police brutality, but rather the widespread use of video cameras and the audacity of a mere citizen outside of the criminal justice system capturing police activities on film.

I have personally experienced being beaten by a black police officer while handcuffed at a Greyhound Bus station in Columbus, Ohio, being strapped down and drugged at the Justice Center in Cleveland, and sprayed with mace while locked in an Ohio prison cell. Whether prison guard or police, all should be required to take an extensive battery of psychological exams periodically throughout their employment to realistically determine whether they can consistently interact professionally and appropriately. It is unrealistic for this society to anticipate solving crime, with no desire to rehabilitate or reform criminals, and the system, when the system's own actions are often criminal, not limited to threats, beatings, and favoritism stemming out of racism.

Having approximately seventeen years experience inside the penal and judicial system, a virtual product of them, it has been made understandable to me that only persons with money, and those who create, enforce, and represent the law are free from prosecution. I am convinced that many good people will be outraged just realizing what I have shared thus far, and the significance of society listening to black males who are not depicted accurately and honestly in media and movies becomes crucial when it is accepted that one in four black males are caught up in the criminal justice system by parole, proba-

tion, and prison. In many cases it is a result of not being able to afford proper and effective trial representation.

Black America as a whole represents 12 to 14 percent of the U.S. population, and there is simply no justifiable explanation except racism and inequality in economics, politics, and social status that can account for blacks representing close to 50 percent of the jail and prison population in this country. America has more people imprisoned than any other, and more blacks imprisoned than there are blacks imprisoned in South Africa. To merely conclude that blacks are born criminals is a racist conviction based on ignorance and complicity to injustice. To argue that blacks commit more crimes than whites, that there are not sentencing disparities when demographics and types of crimes committed are taken into account is as logical as blacks being forced into slavery and then expected to be non-violent. Knowing that statistics can be manipulated to read a desired outcome, no black male needs statistics to substantiate that most child molesters and mass murderers are white.

The prevailing school of thought in this country among criminal justice officials is to imprison as many people as possible, and by doing so, solve the crime problem. In the first six months of 1990 approximately 50,000 persons were imprisoned. Poor whites and others who are economically disadvantaged are targeted expeditiously, and the ramifications of black male incarceration is devastating to an already dying black family structure, which itself is a contributing factor leading to black male extinction. Unfortunately, blacks being imprisoned or dying at a higher rate than whites does not appear to affect a predominantly white society as much as drug use, and then only indirectly when it involves blacks using drugs.

Blacks are not so gullible that they cannot see even at an early age, the U.S. ruling and destroying this country and oth-

ers by the gun. Virtually all my life I have read and heard of governments like China ruling and influencing its citizens with the use of propaganda. I have come to learn that the U.S. is equally guilty. In particular, the media in this country habitually informs and depicts only the worst of crimes and criminals, as if to give a biased impression of anyone accused of a crime. Propaganda that rears its effects with increases in police shows that encourage viewer participation, and has become so pervading that one is left to wonder that because of the increase in drug and violent crime, if it is possible to select a jury that is not inclined to convict a person simply because that person has been accused and brought before the court for trial. It cannot be denied that this type of subliminal influence has a direct effect upon many people, most of whom may have never have experienced any association or contact with an accused criminal, a black male, or the criminal justice system.

Where media propaganda is not sufficient to encourage public fear to win taxpayer support of the "throw away the key" attitude, there are the police, politicians, and prison administrators that have a vested interest in sustaining the impression that all accused persons are dangerous and need to be imprisoned. Once that fear is instilled and the taxpayer is convinced that they in particular may be the criminal's next victim, John Q. Public is now willing to submit to financial rape, in the form of taxes for an inflated amount (typically \$25,000 to \$30,000 annually) to house each inmate, commonly itemized in terms of food, clothing, and medical care. It would be counterproductive to disclose with equal emphasis to the showing of only the worst of crimes and criminals, that the majority of those incarcerated are non-violent (in federal prison that majority is as much as 90 percent), in an imperfect criminal justice system, with an acceptably small but

significant percentage of whose guilt is questionable. Nor is it shared that many prisoners serving short sentences rarely catch a common cold, never requiring costly health care, or that a considerable amount of prison food is produced by prison labor. Foods such as corn, beans, melons, peppers, tomatoes, potatoes, and cabbage. There are prison farms that raise beef and pork, and meats that do require purchasing are often low in nutritional value and purchased in large quantities that advantages substantial discounts. In addition, it is rumored that some private businesses donate foods that have passed expiration dates of freshness to obtain tax benefits. Prisons produce much more than the traditionally joked license plates, such as soaps and detergents, towels, sheets, underwear, boots, gloves, furniture, and other prison issue clothing. It is the public's lack of knowledge that allows taxpayers to pay one dollar more for the same item of clothing they paid for the previous year.

Of course, President Bush gave a good example of the advantage of playing on public fears in his 1988 campaign commercials of Willie Horton, a black man convicted of murder, who had raped and tried to kill a Maryland woman while he was furloughed from prison. This was to the disadvantage of presidential candidate Michael Dukakis, and black males. It should be stressed also that prisoners themselves have unknowingly contributed to their own demise and the continued victimization of those unwarranted and unjustly incarcerated. A good example of this is how a released prisoner questioned by peers regarding the prison experience typically responds to give a manly or macho impression, such as having to fight or maim other prisoners for survival or to retain their sexuality. Only partly is this understandable, in the sense that it is very humiliating to share the truth of being frequently disrespected by prison staff, spoken to as if animals, and threatened with

being put in the “hole,” as well as the ever aware silent threat of hurting a prisoner’s chances of being paroled. No prisoner wants to emphasize that physical humiliation prevails over rehabilitation.

Less than a decade ago prison guards and police officers salaries were a mere pittance, and today it is a more lucrative socially acceptable profession considered to be very masculine. I am unaware of the correctness regarding prisons receiving state and federal funds each time a prisoner walks through its doors, however, it is not unusual here in Ohio that a prisoner having served his sentence in the county jail prior to being transferred to the prison where “good time” days are applicable to any time served on his sentence, is nevertheless transferred to prison and released that very day, after being issued a prison number. Nor can there be any doubt that prisons provide jobs to thousands and are especially profitable to the small communities where they are often located.

Consider also that prisoners are given an account for which to retain the average Ohio inmate’s monthly pay of eighteen dollars (which has remained unchanged for at least a decade), and an unlimited amount that an inmate can receive from institution-approved sources. While an inmate is offered the option of investing in government bonds (which primarily only prisoners serving lengthy sentences are interested in), he cannot and does not earn interest on his account otherwise. It is speculated that logically someone does. Perhaps only on a percentage of the total of all accounts, but few believe that funds are simply held in each respective prison’s front office collecting dust.

Ongoing attempts for prison and jail privatization, the private business sector seeking to lease jail and prison space with claims of cost efficiency and high-tech security would support

the idea that prisons are profitable, though as yet privatization in this respect still has some constitutional issues to address. In 1980 there were, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 329,821 persons imprisoned, up 134 percent in 1990 to 777,243. It is an interesting fact for Ohio residents to note that the brother of Ohio's present Governor, heads a company that is one of the largest jail and prison builders in this country.

Prisons were encouraged in this country by the Quakers living in Pennsylvania some 200 years ago, who held the belief that a criminal should be imprisoned, given a Bible, and expected to become penitent (the root word of penitentiary). One of the first problems they encountered exists to this day, that of prison overcrowding. Though many outspoken criminal justice officials have adamantly expressed that building more prisons is not the solution, they are still being built and their function is granted a perfection not given to any other social institution, whereby it is automatically concluded that everyone in prison unquestionably needs to be there, and further, they are undoubtedly guilty of what they have been accused. This perfection, with propaganda, insures that the majority of people in this society, merely upon hearing of a person in prison and without having any other specifics, makes a conditioned assumption that the person is a drug dealer, rapist, murderer, child molestor, or some other such hideous thing. These same people have not been even remotely encouraged to consider that the person may in fact be unjustly confined, or confined for a non-violent offense, or a drug user in which that person themselves is the only victim.

It is not my intention to encourage violence or advocate that there is not a need for prisons, that the prison doors should be flung wide open, or that prisons should be comparable to a va-

cation resort. As one U.S. Supreme Court Justice has niggardly been quoted as saying in years past, “no one promised them a rose garden.” It is that sort of attitude that supports the likes of controversy of condemnation regarding prisoners receiving a free education in Massachusetts. There is definitely a need for prisons, ideally to incarcerate and prayerfully rehabilitate persons who are primarily a physical threat to others, or who cannot be reformed after appropriate alternatives have failed.

Prisoners are not much different than others, in the respect that no one wants family, friends, or any other human beings abused, raped, robbed, or killed. While this may not apply to every prisoner, there is little doubt that presently, the primary purpose of incarceration is being abused, creating victims rather than protecting them. Sadly, directly or indirectly many people know of someone caught up in the criminal justice system and know that person is a victim.

It is important to stress with great emphasis that there is no implication in any way that *all* penal and criminal justice officials are bad, corrupt, or evil, however, there are enough with these sadistic characteristics and idiosyncrasies to cause grave concern. There are police officers and prison guards that do a professional job without taking it upon themselves to make a prisoner’s time as difficult as possible, and nor is that in their job description. Nevertheless, too often many become jaded towards prisoner complaints, which affects their professionalism and the prisoner.

The quality of prisons, prison staff, and prisoners determine whether a released prisoner has learned more about crime and injustice than anything else, or frequently consumed with pent up rage and hate that enhances recidivism. The naked truth is that one of the most sincere individuals in the world is a prisoner walking out of prison gates. That

person does not want to do or think of anything that will lead them back into prison. However, here in Ohio a released prisoner is given only seventy-five dollars with which to begin anew, despite the fact that most prisoners across the country entering into prison lose practically everything they owned. This too puts a released prisoner in a situation that promotes recidivism.

Still, others get out of prison even more aware of evil and an unscrupulous criminal justice system, and the fact that those claiming goodness have not had any impact or genuine concern towards reform. They reason that they have already missed out on the fun times, and that it is not going to last long before the system grabs them again, so get in all the fun and memories you can. That reasoning aids in returning to prison. Prisoners need to accept that lost time cannot be made up for.

Even for a person who has experienced the criminal justice system, it is a shocking event, the depiction of which in media and movies does not compare to the reality. It is without argument that the concept of rehabilitation does not exist in prisons today, resulting in prisoners released to poverty and unemployment, and unrealistically expected to be successful. Rehabilitation is possible if first desired by society and the prisoner, and encouraged by government implementing adequate programs.

four

SERIOUSLY BITTING

WHILE CONFINED AT the Aiken Youth Facility in South Carolina, I again contacted my family. I had no one else to turn to for money to meet those basic needs not supplied by the institution, such as toilet articles, underwear, and the cigarettes that I smoked. Virginia sent me a package of clothing, and wrote several times a month to send a money order, and with my infrequently phoning home I was able to speak briefly and mutually uncomfortably with my father, but never any of my sisters and brothers. The boys' prison had a functional radar station within the fence and directly across from the barracks type dorms that we were housed in. It was while in the South Carolina prison system that I first became aware of and started practicing masturbation, and over the years it

was to become a habitually perceived personal problem. I remained in the institution for nine months before being released to a halfway house in Columbia, where I obtained a job as a room service waiter at the Carolina Inn on Assembly Street the same day of my release, at the very first place I sought employment.

I truly liked the job, the feeling of representing the hotel, of being a part of something bigger, and the many people that I met and envied for being able to afford such living, including some celebrities. I also acquired an attraction for a young woman name Sadie, who worked there as a waitress. To my disappointment she rejected my repeated advances, and I later learned that she was involved with an older black man who also worked there. My getting out of prison did not deter or discourage me from stealing, and neither did my having a job. I always wanted more, a better life, a girl of my own, a car, and I never seemed to be getting there fast enough. Seeing other guys my age with these things only made me want them more, and caused me to feel that something was wrong with me because I was not obtaining them. To have a girlfriend and experience sex had become very important to me, and I was convinced that I would never realize that without expensive clothing, a car, and the confidence that having those things would give. Besides, I still had the habit of looking into cars when and wherever I walked the streets, judging what the value of the tape-player might possibly be.

One night, out walking the streets to get away from the halfway house where I roomed with an old man with the most horrible smelling feet, I passed a nightclub where a white van that contained a ten-speed bike and some other things was parked nearby. I silently broke into the van, stealing the bike. Days later, and already riding the bike to work and around

town, the owner spotted it outside the hotel where I worked, and causing a small scene, claimed his ownership. Confronted with the theft, I lied that I had bought it, and pretending reluctance, I conceded that it did cross my mind that it could have been stolen.

Just days after that incident, I broke into a car with the intention of stealing the radio tape-player, but unfortunately for the owner I found the keys in the glove compartment. The car was a 1969 Chevelle, an automatic with a 396 engine. It was powder-blue, a white vinyl top, white leather bucket seats, Cragar mags, and Hercules wide-belt 50's on the back and 70's on the front. I fell in love with it, and having felt uncomfortable in the halfway house, remembering the bike theft incident, the rejections of several female coworkers, as well as my ever feeling homesick, I quit the job, working there less than a month. I had no real concern for the fact that I had no driver's license, or that the car was not truly mine. All that mattered to me was that I possessed the keys and the car, and therefore I reasoned, it was mine. As I set out on the interstate headed north, I could easily envision how good I looked, how others would see me, and especially the girls, who surely would have me now. I could even imagine as I cruised at sixty miles per hour, that I could hear the engine whining to me in a small insistent voice, "please let me stretch out..., please let me do my thing." I was consumed with the immature thought that the car actually made me a man.

Proudly arriving in Cleveland, and certain that my lies to my family about how I got the car were not believed, my father was apparently so impressed by the car that he allowed me to park it obscurely in the backyard, hinting at possibly helping me to legitimize it if I would keep it parked there. I could not refrain from driving it. The possibility of it being le-

gally mine, and the future were things that I was unwilling to wait for, and could not see. I wanted to be seen right then, by the girls in our neighborhood, and I found any excuse I could to drive. I was convinced that it would take only a mere look at me driving the car from the right girl, and she would want me. I even went to Sherry's house, my old high school girlfriend, trying to impress and finally win her. I had not been back in Cleveland one week before the car was stolen from me shortly after parking it in front of our home.

I was extremely upset, and that was compounded by my father constantly admonishing me to get a job, until he put me out of the house again. I went back to living from hand to mouth, chicken-snatching, sometimes finding other valuables such as clothing, cash, and guns. I had never intentionally set out to steal an auto. I really do not know how, unless I have the keys. Of course, I have heard other guys talk of stealing cars, and particularly so because Cleveland has a reputation in crime circles of producing car thieves. So I had heard and saw in movies that a car could be "hot-wired," that the ignition could be started with a "dent-puller" normally used to repair damaged autos, and of "peeling" the steering column with a screwdriver. What I did know how to do was to slip a coat-hanger through the car window, lifting up the door lock, and such was the case when I again found the keys inside a six- or seven-year-old oldsmobile at the Cleveland State University campus parking lot near downtown. I was already bitter, mad at the world and blaming everyone but myself for my living in the streets, believing that I was neither loved or wanted, and that there just was not any thing left for me in Cleveland. So, I hustled the money for gas, and got on the highway headed south, hopeful to get to Florida where I did not have to answer to anyone, where I had fun stealing, where it was

profitable and easy, and where if left to sleep outside, it would at least be warm. I made it as far as Rome, Georgia, about thirty-five miles outside of Atlanta where I was stopped for speeding. The car had been reported stolen, and I was charged with the federal case of interstate transportation of a motor vehicle in early November 1976.

For years afterwards I would tell the lie (at times believing it myself) that I had gotten involved with an auto theft organization that supplied the keys and legal license plates to new luxury cars, paying me two-hundred and fifty dollars for each car I drove to Atlanta and Ft. Lauderdale, staying overnight in major hotels and flying back to Cleveland at the organization's expense. Lying seemed better than telling the humiliating truth of getting a federal case for an aged car.

In jail awaiting the disposition of the case, my family seemed to have anticipated that I would get into further trouble. It was unrealistic of me to expect that they would come to my aid with funds for an attorney, but again I needed money for cigarettes, toilet articles, and snack foods while awaiting trial, and I needed to be in touch with someone for those things in the event that I went to prison. Ignorant of the law and legal proceedings, I was utterly dependent upon the court-appointed attorney who quickly worked out a deal with the prosecutor, and assured me that in exchange for my guilty plea I would get no more than two years on the maximum five year sentence. I pled guilty and was forthwith given a four year sentence.

My sentence began with my being sent to a federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana. I remained in a lockdown section for new prisoners called "I-UP" for six weeks before being sent to Milan, Michigan. I can remember the U.S. Marshals and how congenial they were in transporting us prisoners on buses similar to those used by Greyhound. As we stepped on the bus,

shackled and handcuffed, we were asked and given the specific brand of cigarettes that each individual smoked, and they were marked "for government use only."

At that point in my life I could not honestly say that I had a lot of experience with prison or doing serious time (also called bitting). The youth facility in South Carolina was not much different from the local juvenile center. Still, basically a person is not so much afraid or scared of going to prison, but rather apprehensive, of not knowing what to expect.

While at Milan and despite initially spending a lot of time in the hole, I managed to work in the prison factory as a spot welder making frames for various size lockers, earned my GED, and began college level courses with Washtenaw Community College, a local college program set up in the prison. I recall fondly a rigid instructor name Don Tabor, with whom I took my first computer course, becoming familiar with the now obsolete IBM 29 key punch machine, and learning the RPG programming language which I do not remember very well from want of use. I had also began to practice the saxophone, but did not apply myself as I should have. During some of the time I spent in the hole I completed a correspondence course in RPG II with the then Sperry Univac, a company that has since merged with Burroughs to form the Unysis Company. I also took a correspondence course in Hotel/Motel Management that I did not complete with International Correspondence Schools in Scranton, Pennsylvania until they discovered that I was not eligible for veterans benefits.

Being a little guy with a lot to say, in addition to my youthful immaturity, led to my getting in quite a few fights. I could not really whip anyone, but when I perceived that a fight with someone was inevitable, I predictably threw the first punch, anticipating being beaten thereafter and wanting it to at least

be said that I got a few licks in.

After sixteen months, and considered a disciplinary problem inmate, I was transferred to the federal prison in Oxford, Wisconsin where one side of the compound is cellblock living that all new inmates start out from, working with good behavior to the other side of the compound where there is cottage living with each inmate having a room to himself. Of course this was over a decade ago, and likely there would be two-man cells now. I again completed one semester of course work with the University of Wisconsin Baraboo/Sauk college program, a part of the University of Wisconsin Center System. I worked for a month in a carpentry shop, and had a recreation specialist take an interest in me to teach me boxing, however, I would not stick to the running program he began me on. During those days I was heavily inclined towards the music of George Clinton and his Parliament and Funkadelic groups. I also got involved in a Transactional Analysis Program in one of the cottages devoted to therapeutic living. It was based on the late Dr. Eric Berne's book of "Games People Play." Essentially the cottage inmates gathered in a big circle and confronted inappropriate behavior, such as stealing sugar and other food stuff from the prison kitchen, or planning to do wrong upon release, and anything in which a "game" could be perceived and evaluated. Though I learned some things, my impression was that the real game was the program itself because so many prisoners tried to humiliate rather than help.

There were many lonely periods for me in prison, but with the exception of Virginia writing and my rare calls home, I really did not communicate with anyone. At one point I wrote to Wanda, a girl and her family with whom I had briefly lived with, however, her response was an attempt to get money from me to help her buy a car. Apparently, she held the belief like

so many others that a federal prisoner has money. I have heard the rumors that federal prisoners make minimum wage, and while it was not true when I was in the federal system, suffice it to say that it does not sound logical even today. During my incarceration there was a pay system set up in which an inmate could earn as much as two hundred dollars a month, but that would include working every weekend of overtime. Her attempt to get money from me only reinforced my belief that a man had to have “things” in order to have a girl. We never communicated again after that. I had also tried locating my mother by writing the Red Cross, sharing with them all the information I had about her, but I never received a reply.

Around January 1979, I was released to a halfway house in downtown Cleveland, a time during which disco dancing was popular. With my father’s help and encouragement I got a job working at the iron foundry where he held a job as an inspector, and had been working there for years. It was the best paying job that I ever had, and I also got reacquainted with a forgotten high school friend, Archer Walker, also called Archie, who refreshed my memory of being called “the moocher” by other school kids because of my often appearing in the school bathroom and other places friends gathered to get high to mooch a hit or two of their marijuana. I was never known to have or share any of my own. We also cut school, going to his home while his parents worked, and drank wine with the reefer we smoked. For a time rumor had it that wherever you found one Archie you could also find the other.

We quickly got back into old habits, smoking reefer, riding around town in his new car, and having graduated to drinking beer and hard liquor. He was married to a girl name Rose who worked at a factory just across the street from the duplex home where they rented the upstairs. His marriage did not stop him

from flirting with other women. He was the bolder of us two, and loved to shout catcalls at the girls. I remember one time a woman in a passing car returned his challenging advances, which led to them pulling over to the side of the road and arranging a meeting. I got very irate that day because she was so lovely and would not look at or consider me. I fumed with the knowledge of his marriage, as I stalked off leaving my wallet with cash in his car, not seeing him again until the next day.

There were times when Archie, Rose, and I would go to a favorite bar to shoot pool, drink, and smoke reefer, but for the most part she resented my spending so much time with him. Other times I would simply visit their house while he pursued his hobby of talking on a CB radio, his handle being Dr. Limestone. Archie was also a very heavy drinker who fashioned himself a man that knew horse flesh, taking me to the race track where I once won what I then thought was a lot of money.

My residency at the halfway house was fairly lax in comparison to that of the state prisoners, who were monitored more closely, but also because I had a job. Employment tends to alleviate the hassles of most halfway house staff, and especially so with an above average paying job. Being an employed federal resident at the center allowed me to pretty much come and go as I pleased, though mainly I went to work self-motivated and seeking all the overtime I could get. Despite having a little more freedom of movement than state residents, a halfway house is nevertheless an extension of prison where a resident is required to sign in and out, and have their whereabouts known at all times.

When I was not working and wanted to get away from the center I would lie about an appointment or even that I did have to work, so that I could go to one of several X-rated

movie theaters where I smoked reefer and masturbated in the darkness. Nights that I was not with Archie, I would go to one of the discotheques in close proximity to the center. I felt only slightly insecure about not having a car on those nights, and it was unthinkable that Archie or anyone else would let me use their car. Even when we were together he would not let me drive, but he also knew I had no license. I was consoled by the fact that I was beginning to wear nice clothes, and I had more money than I ever had from stealing, than I was use to, and that enabled me to keep a personal supply of marijuana.

The nights I went to the disco clubs were often preceded by taking speed, usually "black beauties." I had no thought or concern with mixing them with the alcohol I drank at the club, only that the combination made me not so self-conscious to inhibit me from dancing, and I could do so without tiring. I had the confidence of good clothing, that I looked well, and if I did lack anything the cash in my pocket would compensate for it. Inside the disco I would walk about cocky and arrogant, to be seen, to make an unnecessary trip to the men's room where I knew other guys had gathered to smoke reefer, and where I could also be seen smoking my own, and to impress upon everyone my implication of being important.

Usually I walked through the club enjoying the flashing lights, which makes a person who really does not know how to dance look as though they are very good at it. I loved the loud music and the eyes of people upon me, checking me out, and sizing me up as I nursed a drink of 151 proof rum first introduced to me by Archie and which I reasoned to be a "man's" drink. I would discreetly look at the faces and physiques of the girls clustered together at various tables and on the dance floor, seeking the right circumstances to approach any that really impressed me. Basically I wanted no other guys around,

and hopeful of an inviting smile. I loved the image I presented, and delighted in the feelings of power and control that money gave me when I offered a girl a drink, nonchalantly commanding the waitress to “give her what she wants,” and polishing off the image with a healthy tip.

Most nights out dancing ended with my going back to the halfway house feeling personally humiliated, foolish, and ashamed, trying to get to my room without anyone noticing my intoxication. One night, however, I met a very attractive girl. Renee was fulfilling of my personal preference for petite women, and I assumed that she was attracted to my carefree spending the night I met her. We danced and I bought drinks for her and the other girls she was with, exchanging phone numbers and calling her the following day. I could not believe my good fortune at gaining the attention of a girl so incredibly fine. Due to my boldly requesting sex with her at every opportunity we spoke, things progressed quickly between us. Just days before, I had unintentionally admitted to Archie my virginity, which he indiscreetly shared with my father who to my embarrassment sympathetically expressed that I should have told him. I ended the conversation before it began by making light of it, but with Renee I was very insistent, trying to persuade her by allowing her to use me financially. At twenty-two, I was very anxious to have sex, and to be able to share and be included with other men by being able to say I did it. To my surprise Renee agreed to have sex with me, though I think because she felt obligated, because she also tried to discourage me by sharing that she was on her period.

In the afternoon I nervously caught the bus with her to a downtown hotel, unwilling to let even her period deter me, and in a rare sober moment, I felt like a country hick on a first date, and even more so from riding the bus. I felt no real

warmth from her, but rather a coldness that I was responsible for. In the hotel room she undressed down to her panties very quickly and hopped into bed and under the covers before I could get a glimpse of her body. Having lost my initial enthusiasm I climbed in next to her. We lay flat on our backs, side by side, as she mechanically grabbed my penis and boldly informed me that it was not getting erect. Overwhelmed with shame, she assured me of better results at a later date, but that gave me no comfort. We never did see each other after that day, but I once inquired about her to another guy, and he shared with me that she had a child, and that was not too long after I had known her.

There were rumors around the job of possible layoffs, and with the money I was wasting and the knowledge that I could not stay at the halfway house indefinitely, I began stealing. Even if I could have moved in with my father I did not want to. I had opened a bank account, but I kept only enough in it to keep the account open, thinking it more important to boast of having an automatic teller machine card in my name. With the exception of some new clothes, I really had not accomplished very much. So, while still employed I broke into a car, stealing a large keyboard and amplifier, connecting the amplifier to a receiver which I also stole. There was no inquiry from the staff about these things in my room, and I often filled it with loud music as I rocked in a comfortable chair contemplating my next move, ever thinking and hoping it would be my "big lick," to set me on my feet, to at least get me started with a car and an apartment, but it never happened.

The rumor of layoffs became official, coinciding with media stories of the steel industry folding, and of the U.S. not selling any cars. Lacking seniority and the minimum hours needed to get into the union, I knew I would be one of the first to be

laid off. This fueled my justification to steal, until one night, just inside the suburb of Shaker Heights, I was arrested by an off-duty police officer working security for a restaurant as I tried to break into some parked cars. I had not been out of prison 90 days.

High when arrested, I sobered quickly in the suburban jail. I became severely depressed, knowing that I would certainly lose my job, and too ashamed to contact anyone, not even my family. I knew that I would have to go back to federal prison first, to finish the remainder of the time there, in addition to new charges from the state. I pictured my life of never having sex, of habitual masturbation, and of no one ever truly loving or caring about me. These thoughts encouraged my self-pity, and removing the slacks I wore, I hung myself on the bars of the cell. I do not know how long I had passed out, but when I came to, I cried and screamed for the jailer. I was so afraid of myself that I stripped naked of my own accord and gave him all my clothing.

A few days later I was transferred to the Cuyahoga County Jail, the Justice Center in downtown Cleveland, and charged with possession of criminal tools: a coat-hanger. While awaiting trial I sold the amplifier and keyboard to a counselor working at the halfway house with whom I had several counseling sessions with. My brother Paul also reappeared in my life during this time, with Denise, his newest girlfriend. Unlike his former high school girlfriend of the same name, I was immediately attracted to her and envious of my brother for having her. I arranged for Paul to get the rest of my personal belongings from the center, being assured that he would store them for me. Denise, apparently knowing of my attraction for her after visiting a few times, and with my brother's obvious persuasion, convinced me to release to her all the money I had

on my jail account, and promising in return to bring me some reefer. I did not see either of them again until years later.

Giving in to the pressures of the court, I pled guilty to the charge and received a one to five year sentence to run concurrent with the remaining federal time. I was first sent to a federal prison in Sandstone, Minnesota. There, I worked in a factory sewing cotton and leather gloves before being released to a nearby county jail to await Ohio authorities, who flew me back to Columbus, Ohio and the Ohio Penitentiary (O.P.) located near downtown.

At O.P. I began corresponding with a thirty-eight year old married Italian woman living in Norwalk, Connecticut who chose my name from among a group of names in a Christian "Visit By Mail" program which I solicited while at Sandstone. Patricia was the first female that I ever openly communicated with. She was persistent and genuinely enthusiastic in sharing with me her knowledge of Christ, and I saw it merely as an opportunity to learn more about the mysteries of women. Aided by the knowledge of not having to face her in person, I told her of my virginity, questioning her about women, and actually demanded that she help me and show me by God to find a woman of my own. I played on her guilt by threatening to get out of prison and be with prostitutes. I argued and denied the love and existence of God because of not having a woman. Unknown to me at the time, she was experiencing marital problems, having shared with me from the beginning that her husband would be very angry if he knew of our corresponding, and especially so because of my being black.

Nevertheless, she shared with me as much of her life as she could, including her two young daughters, and introducing me to an older Christian woman, a close friend of hers who also wrote to me occasionally. Doing likewise, I shared with

Patricia as much as I could allow myself without destroying my implied image of naivete or my sexually desiring her after receiving photos of her. I had never known any woman to any degree of personal intimacy, and with her being of another race, I was consumed with erotic fantasies of being with her.

She was as elated as I when I was granted a parole, and assisted me in expediting arrangements to be paroled to my father. Shortly before my release in April 1981, and totally unexpectedly she wrote informing me that her husband had moved out, and in with a woman of my age, and to my greatest joy she openly confessed to loving me. She explained that prior to her husband leaving she could not share those feelings with me, but that she could then. She came to Cleveland to visit me just two days after my release.

Patricia drove the nine hours in a yellow Volkswagen, and we met right in front of the hotel where I had rented a nice room. It was the same hotel where I had taken Renee, and unfortunately, the results were the same. Being very frustrated, she soothed me, wanting very much to please me, and unaware that I had experienced the same impotence with a woman before her. When she moved to perform oral sex on me, I stopped her, for thinking it a degrading act, wanting to experience it, but not with someone that I thought so highly of. In my mind she was the first pure and good thing I had known, and a woman of God. I did not want her to do things I had fantasized about, read about, and saw in the dirty movies I frequented, though I had shared with her my habit of watching them. I wanted to show my love for her by not allowing her to do it.

I blamed myself for feeling pressured to perform some thing I had not experienced, but she assured me it was okay. That morning we dressed and kneeled down to pray togeth-

er, but even still I felt sure that after failing sexually I would not see or hear from her again. I was wrong. We continued to write and phone each other daily, until she again came to Cleveland, this time by bus, and with me living in a rundown hotel room for welfare recipients after my father kicked me out of the house several days following her first visit.

Reluctantly, I must confess that during this period I stole my brother Ricky's TV from his home. At the time he and his wife were separated and not living in the home they had been purchasing while together. After stealing the TV, I went to a bar called the "Victory" on Kinsman Avenue and sold it for 100 dollars. After leaving the bar and before having walked a complete block I was pulled into an alley by two armed men. I was made to take my shoes off in the snow in their search for the money. They did not even bother to take my virtually new leather jacket, just the money. I was very angry, of course, but later reasoned that I deserved far worse for having stolen from my brother.

Sadly, surrounded by the squalor and depression of my circumstances I again failed with impotence with Patricia. I am sure that by that time in both our minds we were beginning to seriously question our relationship, about which I would ultimately conclude that it was simply not in God's will for either of us. Her close friend had even begun to reprove us, and our not consummating the relationship confirmed the reality.

The last time I saw Patricia she was on the bus leaving Cleveland. In the years to come I would never be more pleased to not have had sex with a woman, and I will always remember not only the opportunity she gave me, but the love, prayers, and trust we shared. It was only a few days after she left that the pain of losing her was forced upon me with my arrest as I walked near downtown scouting the streets with a coat hang-

er concealed within easy grasp. Undercover police who were familiar with me and my modus operandi watched from rooftops and busted me before I got the chance to steal anything. I was charged with receiving stolen property and possession of criminal tools, and days later the Ohio Adult Parole Authority lodged a detainer against me for violating my parole. Again, I had not been out of prison longer than 90 days.

Even being in jail in my hometown I knew I could not count on my family for any help. It was especially difficult for me because Patricia would no longer accept any of my calls. I became deeply depressed, crying for hours at a time, and subsequently began taking anti-depressant medicines. I took them for a few weeks and then stopped, reasoning that I was not truly sick, and I did not want to go through life using drugs for what I thought was a crutch. Eventually I accepted losing Patricia as well as my family.

The public defender assigned to my case was typical as far as court-appointed attorneys go, not at all eager to take the case to trial, and showing little interest at my claiming no grounds for the receiving stolen property charge, because I had not actually stolen anything. However, unethical as it was, the undercover cops claimed to have a tape-player that I allegedly stole. What I did not know at the time was that the unfounded charge was really to make the task of disposing my case that much easier, with the state promising to drop that charge in exchange for my pleading guilty to the other. Everything worked out according to the design of the criminal justice staff associated with my case. I pled guilty to possession of criminal tools, receiving another one to five year sentence aggregated with the 1979 sentence, making me a parole violator recommissioned on a new felony and serving a two to ten year sentence.

Prior to be transferred to the receiving center at O.P. I turned back to the scriptures that Patricia had weaned me on. I wanted answers to my life. As lay on my bunk alone in the cell I had some sort of out of body experience. Whether it was something that went into me or came out of me I have never been quite sure. What I am sure of is that something happened to me that day which I have never figured out.

five

MUNIFICENTLY EDUCATING

NOTHING SCARES A racist white man more than a black man with some sense.

Picture this scenario in today's American society. A young black man has a part time job at a warehouse to help pay his way through a state college. He cannot afford a car, so he catches a bus to and from work, and to school. On this particular day he is wearing clean pressed jeans, a fresh laundered shirt, and tennis shoes with a few noticeable scuff marks, but nevertheless he's a reasonably attractive guy. As he gets off the bus headed for work he sees an attractive girl whom he has noticed several times before. Today he has the courage to speak a pleasant greeting, but she ignores him with an upturned nose and quickens her pace. As she rounds the corner she sees an-

other black man, this one dressed more fashionable, wearing gold chains and rings, and leaning against a highly polished late model car. It is apparent that he fits a drug dealer's profile. In fact, she may well know that he is, however, when he speaks; even a crude greeting, she replies happily with a smile, pleasant return greeting and continued conversation. She cannot foresee a week later the drug dealer is busted, losing all he had, and the college student wins a five million dollar lottery, with a ticket carried in his pocket the day he spoke to her.

Many people have expressed the desire to be younger and still know what they know now. These people have encountered in their lives someone older, wiser, and more experienced sharing with them the proper way to go, the right things to do, and encouraging them that they truly can be whatever they choose to be. However, these people likely did not listen any more than many of today's youth listens, and especially so with information flowing in abundance that they think they have all the answers. There is no denying that there is discrimination, racism, poverty, unemployment, injustices, fears of nuclear catastrophe, and man's own selfish greed destroying the earth by raping the environment. Nevertheless, these are not and should not be used by youth or anyone as excuses to not plan for and anticipate the tomorrows, for God could easily campaign to end this world as we know it with this sentence.

Many of today's youth are reared in single parent homes headed by women. In the case of blacks it is reasonable to assume that slavery and its associated discrimination and racism initiated the erosion of black self-esteem and notably the black family structure. One might further speculate that government sponsored welfare programs caused a division between black males and females. Welfare benefited primarily single mothers, and though not giving them much, did allow

them to better forge ahead economically and socially as black males trailed behind suffering more directly the effects of discrimination and racism. Predictably, women could look more favorably towards government which provided them with something, even to refrain from or terminate a potentially ideal relationship with a black male to meet welfare (farewell black man) requirements, and more inclined to view him as little more than a sluggard.

Consequently, it might further be speculated that poverty-stricken black males feel inadequate and angry with black women, perceiving them as non-supportive, and abandoning them for a society that covets, favors, and protects women to such an extent that it borders on the criminal to challenge or speak out against women in any way. Black males may feel that they can no longer be the complete head of a personal relationship where government is an unseen third party mandating an equality with men that black males innately do not accept or feel comfortable with.

Regardless as to any speculation into the causes, there are black males, and increasingly now, young white males who are being seen as rebellious, though no one seems to be able to specifically isolate what they are rebellious towards. There is an attitude among black males towards women, and this is reinforced by the perceptions of black males regarding Mike Tyson's marriage to Robin Givens, in which many conclude that her only interest was financial, and the various black women attempting to sue him for alleged fondling. Incidents involving black women justly or unjustly destroying black males. Black males look at Anita Hill's testimony against Clarence Thomas and reason that the rarity and difficulty of getting blacks into high political office outweighs her allegations. One doubts her testimony with knowledge that if Thomas was trying to se-

duce her, surely he would fail with such gross tactics as pubic hair in bottles. Black males see Latoya Jackson as jealous and whorish, envying her brother's superstar status, and showing a willingness to do virtually anything for public attention, even posing nude, and making allegations against her own family. We see the use of a black female to bring down former Washington Mayor Marion Barry, and wonder at the message that Liz Taylor's *n*th marriage and the publicity it generated gives to young girls, that divorce is okay. Black males would like all black women to know that there are enough whites pulling us down. We do not need other blacks, and especially our own black women to aid them.

A person has only to consider the present popularity of rap music (which surprisingly is increasing in sales to young white males) and its explicit language of women as "bitches" and "ho's" who forsake human and moral obligations for their own selfish and often sexual desires, and favoring whatever and whoever is financially and materially expedient. Such descriptions of women are indicative of real feelings and thoughts, and not uncommon in black males' conversations, in which women are seen as objects to be used for sexual gratification, financial gain, and then discarded. Black males feel an implied demand from women that acceptance is conditional upon having financial and material substance first and foremost, with no concern for being a helpmate, and no consideration given to the idea of working together.

The idea of women knowingly or unknowingly contributing to the present black male crisis is contradictory of the prevailing emphasis stressing the need for more positive black male role models. To adopt the latter view as a cure all is to attribute the causes, problems, and solution exclusively to black males. Black males in and of themselves do not have the remedy for

racism. It is without question that positive role models are needed and should be emphasized, nevertheless, such already exist, and the lack of the same does not supercede the effect of what is actually experienced growing up in homes headed by women, and especially so if it is accepted that an individual's beliefs, faith, and optimism stems from that individual's experiences. Therefore, the lack of an adult male in the home, and positive role models outside the home, while certainly desirable and has a negative effect from the lack, does not logically outweigh factors of actual experience.

Undoubtedly, poverty and unemployment are at the heart of drug dealing and using in the black community. Still, it is amazing how persons can watch major and repeated drug arrest involving wealthy, powerful, and prominent people, and think they can sell drugs successfully and make a fortune. One cannot watch the lives of drug users rapidly deteriorate and think they can use drugs without consequences, or watch the results of gang violence but join a gang thinking it will not touch them. Cemeteries, jails, and prisons are being filled with blacks, many of the youth not out of their teens, who do not adopt these attitudes.

Neither blacks nor youth are naïve. Because of the pervasiveness of information they know far more than past generations regarding crime, money, sex, and life in general. They have heard of death and prison tales from media and that portrayed in movies, as well as the boast of ex-prisoners who ignorantly glorify crime, death, and imprisonment. Blacks swayed and influenced by rap music listen to the predictions and seriousness of death, drugs, and doing time, to be expected from being "hard" and "in the game." Some have been in trouble with the law before, perhaps in a juvenile or youth facility, touring an adult prison as part of the "scared straight"

approach, or being arrested and released before the sting of confinement sets in. They get second chances only to come away puffed up with confidence and knowledge of being able to handle it and knowing what it's all about.

Our youth, and blacks in particular have to start educating themselves, distinguishing between fantasy and reality, propaganda and truth, and not be moved by the mores of a corrupt, immoral, and selfish society. Educating oneself for self-fulfillment more than any other reason. Reality is that the real game is "hip to be square" and being one's own man, not seeking or needing the approval of any gang involvement to do those things a man has to do. The media information of government provided statistics for monthly unemployment rates are habitually not true, often not taking into account the many discouraged and frustrated people who simply give up looking for work. It is propaganda and it serves a purpose. The television commercials and advertisements of a particular car or clothes provoking the attentions of attractive women, or a specific cologne creating sexual bliss are all fantasy. While there is nothing wrong with the desire for nice things or seeking to obtain them, there is something wrong when you cannot truly afford them but purchase them at any cost. The truth must be accepted and realized that no one, or group of things or people can make a person happy for any significant length of time. Nor are material things so important to justify doing wrong, compromising morals and virtues.

Truthfully, experiencing the actual reality of something definitively never equals the fantasy, and therefore, realistically it is more satisfying to retain and enjoy the fantasy without trying to make it reality. Nothing has enhanced fantasy and materialism more than television and advertisement, which leads to self-destruction by seductively and wily encouraging

and provoking a person to immediately satisfy themselves at any cost to make the fantasy into reality. The television should be turned off, for in reality there is no such thing as the television family. The implications it projects that by purchasing this or that item a person becomes desired, popular, or successful are all false, and is especially harmful to blacks being constantly bombarded with the idea, yet lacking the opportunity to afford or fulfill them.

It is true that education does not create opportunity. Having a college education does not guarantee a person a job or success, but you stand a better chance with it, than those without it who stand no chance at all. Education can enable one to be selective in distinguishing role models. For example, one might admire the accomplishments of Michael Jackson, but one should also realize that perhaps he is a very lonely person, and surely not liking how God made him, suffers from the sin of vanity. Education can allow a person to easily discern reality from fantasy, and recognize that there are forces at work oppressing and literally destroying blacks that even the most honest and sincere individual efforts cannot overcome. These same forces built and justified a country with slavery, feared blacks learning to read and becoming educated, and can only survive by continuing to oppress. With education comes the knowledge that the answers do not lay in being racist, blaming all whites, or being violent and lashing out at you know not what.

There is no denying the reality of racism. In black communities the police themselves often do not adhere to the laws. It may be questioned whether Detroit being the largest predominantly black populated city in this country is all a matter of urban blight, whether the statistical percentage of blacks earning the eight hundred dollar a day minimum putting out oil well fires in Kuwait is equal to the percentage of blacks who

fought in the Persian Gulf. In South Carolina blacks are suspected of being manipulated with crack cocaine for payment to harvest peaches, and in Detroit recently it was struck down as unconstitutional to experiment with all-male black schools in an attempt to emphasize black role models and curb the present black male plight. Neither is it discounted that former President Reagan while telling blacks one thing, did another, cutting many social programs, filling the coffers of the rich, reducing the standard of living for blacks, and encouraging racism. Even as his successor continues to do the same, America is being literally sold from under the feet of its citizens, and there is a great deal of social tension, in which we feel, know, and see what they are.

Significantly, people of all races are suffering unaffordable housing, skyrocketing health care cost, education and employment opportunities. Poverty and unemployment extends to the Hispanic and white communities as well as blacks. There are in fact many whites morally just and fair who have personally committed themselves to the causes of the disadvantaged, including and in some cases specifically blacks. There are also successful blacks that interact with non-successful blacks as if the latter were inferior, often simply patronizing rather than assisting, though arguably successful blacks are virtually inaccessible to poor blacks. Nor can it be denied that blacks, while accusing whites of stereotyping them do much to stereotype themselves.

As a people we need to see that we are virtually isolated within our communities, not experiencing travel or cultural rounding, and consequently, our social, economic, and educational world is limited to that environment. Ideally, it is important to recognize that we sorely need to find and maintain a source of unity, for without it, we cannot realistically con-

sider overcoming discrimination and racism. Instead, we will continue to fall victim to an historic war tactic of conquering by dividing. We have become divided by selfishness, being materialistically consumed with gratifying self.

In the present drug crisis it seems almost all drugs smuggled into this country involve whites. Neither is it unheard-of that law enforcement are involved. In fact, truth to tell, whites use more drugs than blacks. No matter, it is no big mystery to a government favoring the rich and a self-gratifying society why blacks and poor whites sell drugs, or that most arrest for drug dealing involve blacks. However, there are no blacks supplying drugs into this country, though there are liquor companies who sell cheap liquor in black communities that cannot be found in white communities. Prior to getting involved in dealing drugs, many blacks did not even have bus fare to get downtown. It is believed among blacks that when crack cocaine was first introduced to this country, it was not viewed as a problem while only blacks were using and destroying themselves with it, but when it began affecting the daughters and sons of the upper middle class, only then did it become a "war on drugs."

Blacks are presently being used primarily to market the drug, a strategy of which any marketing specialist would concede to be highly effective. Because of community isolation blacks find themselves competing against one another for the lucrative drug profits, resulting in an increase in black-on-black crime, and in particular, the death of black males. Government obviously has no genuine concern for blacks or whites simply using drugs, but when it comes to dealing drugs (proving that crime *does* pay), the government is enthusiastically irate from not wanting the poor to prosper in any way. This is clearly substantiated by the fact of unlimited

funds allotted to law enforcement to arrest and confine the dealers, during which the government steals under the cloak of law any money and property it deems to be drug profits, while cutting back programs providing treatment for the user. Law enforcement is not concerned with race in busting drug dealers, and that more than anything strongly suggest that the issue is not completely racist, but economic, and that it is okay for a poor person to *take their life* by using drugs, but not okay to *make a life* from dealing them.

In contemplating the prevalence of crack in poverty-ridden black communities, the biblical story of Cain slaying his brother Abel comes to mind, more appropriately that cocaine is slaying people who are unable to prosper in equality with others. Drug dealing becomes a compromise to achieve an ill-defined material success, with blacks adhering to the philosophy of God blessing the child that has its own, and reluctantly accepting that they cannot depend on anyone, not even their family. The case of blacks not introducing drugs into this country supports the convictions of blacks being the victims of genocide, and unerringly so because poverty and unemployment makes blacks susceptible to drug dealing and using.

Crack is a drug that stimulates certain brain cells or an area of the brain to produce an intense feeling of wellbeing or euphoria. In all actuality the brain can and does produce this feeling without drugs (though arguably not to such an intense degree), such as the feelings derived from self-accomplishment, God, and even being in love. The feeling of euphoria was not intended to be realized from chemicals introduced outside of the body, and consequently there are side effects from doing so. Media has emphasized the material worth of a person depleting from the expense of the addiction, and there is ample medical information regarding its use, such as curbed

appetite for food and sex, speculation from the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta that there may be a link between tuberculosis and crack, and while it is not even mentioned among users, it has been suggested that crack is literally a pain in the ass that causes hemorrhoids. Despite these and other compelling reasons, a more powerful reason has many people continuing to use the drug.

If there is a common denominator in people who deal in and use drugs it is a matter of self-esteem. We have become a people who judge an individual's worth by the car they drive, the clothes they wear, where they live, and the type of work they do. Blacks and poor whites not able to obtain the things that are repeatedly and strongly implied to make a person successful, worthy, and valuable, suggest that there is something wrong with them. Sadly, added to that fact is that blacks overcoming drugs, incarceration, and other situations are often limited in economic aspirations to menial jobs.

Because of the dying black family structure, blacks are growing up without parents and not loving themselves for being convinced that their parents did not love them. This is reinforced by not being able to meet a society's definition of worth, and therefore confirming a people lacking self esteem and having no sense of self-worth. Unequivocally, a healthy self-esteem is vital to a person being human. Thoughts of being unloved and unwanted, of being unworthy, ravage a person's self-esteem, and can lead to depression, suicide, and any number of psychosomatic illnesses. That we feel positive about ourselves is necessary for our mental and physical well-being.

With racism encouraging blacks to be selfish in order to secure the success that a predominately white society defines it to be, each black generation has gotten progressively more selfish. Parents are morally obligated to initially instill within

their own children, self-worth, giving to the child what cannot be earned, bought, sold, or traded for. It is called unconditional love, where by parents innately love a child not because they are rich or poor, doctor or lawyer, black or white, but simply because they are themselves.

For a person experiencing many economic and social obstacles which prevent them and their family from securing clothing, employment, food and housing, that person over a period of time begins to feel and think bad about themselves, and ultimately blame themselves. Bearing in mind the vitalization of an individual's self-esteem, such a person being motivated to feel little better than feces turns to drugs where just for a moment they can look into a mirror and believe themselves to look good and be somebody. Crack cocaine is particularly sought, in some cases even being aware of its dangers, because of the euphoric high it produces. The similarities of crack and other drugs end at the fundamental truth that at the end of every pill, joint, syringe, and crack pipe, at the bottom of every alcoholic beverage all drug users are seeking one thing: peace. Unfortunately for these people, peace cannot be found in drugs. On the contrary, it creates new problems of its own.

The psychological addiction of crack is in the user's desire to maintain the drug's initial euphoric effects, which last only a few minutes at best. Each successive hit of the drug fails to produce the initial euphoria, and subsequently the user gets involved in chasing a "ghost," in which the initial euphoria becomes all-important, and exacts the drug demand. Addiction results quickly, and abstinence is extremely difficult. The user must find something more important than themselves than getting high.

The deficient self-esteem of the drug dealer is manifest-

ed in his lack of self-worth and diligently seeking attention and recognition to the point of stereotyping himself. For example, the first major purchase of a formerly destitute dealer is usually an automobile. This vehicle is typically customized and personalized, kept highly polished, and equipped with a "booming" stereo system. Additional purchases may include fashionable coats and jogging suits, other clothing, expensive top-of-the-line tennis shoes, and gold jewelry. Lacking a sense of self-worth and love for self the dealer cannot love others enough to refrain from selling them death and destruction. Dealers frequently patronize bars and nightclubs so as to be seen and recognized by others, just as they seek to be noticed flashing large amounts of cash and cruising the neighborhood streets in their cars with music blaring. The real song playing is "Hey World, Look At Me."

Dealers become addicted to the fast money earned selling drugs, and the need to be recognized, an addiction not unequal to the users. Virtually all the dealer does screams out for attention, enjoying the power the drug gives them in being able to manipulate others, especially females who are addicted and not above supplying their addiction with sexual favors. Addicted male users are also manipulated, on many instances to sell drugs for the dealer. The dealer is consumed with "fronting," showing off, unaware of such trivial things as platinum being more expensive than gold, and therefore wearing the same excessive and telltale amounts of gold jewelry worn by dealers before them, and of course making law enforcement's job of profiling dealers considerably easier.

Dealers need to accept that true financial wealth does not appear in bulk cash amounts carried on one's person, but rather on a regular eight by eleven sheet of paper which essentially states that the bearer has funds to obtain what they want. It

has been said that a rich man can be distinguished by the fact of no prints in his pockets. Logically, such a person would have little need for coins or wallet, and perhaps no keys. Dealers need to know that rarely is a nice woman of the marrying kind to be found in bars and nightclubs, and that like themselves, people usually gather at such places to make unspoken implications, to be recognized, such as being dressed better than the next person, having a fancier car parked outside, a prettier girl on the arm, a bigger wad of money, and ridiculously, a bigger and more potent drug package. Dealers become competitors against one another in these respects.

Associating oneself with crack in any fashion is to court destruction. It is not unusual for a dealer to tamper with the product and become a user, smoking "premoes" (sometimes called "moes"), or "coco-puffing," smoking a marijuana cigarette laced with crack. This type of smoker reasons that they are not addicted, especially if they use less crack in a premoie than a crack smoker uses in the pipe. They reason that smoking premoes is not as addictive or has the same effects (primarily a willingness to do anything to get the drug) as smoking from a pipe. That is, of course, a lie. Such a smoker is doubly addicted; to crack and marijuana.

Whether using or dealing, crack leads to impulsive actions that perhaps one might not otherwise do. The user must first accept and acknowledge the addiction. When the recovering addict thinks of getting high, they must look beyond the "rush" or "blast" and play the whole tape out. For at the end of the blast, on the remaining part of the tape the user can clearly visualize the demise and foolishness.

For years, blacks in particular have struggled and had a rough time. This is true now more so than ever. This country is in fact in moral decay, as well as economic, Money and sex

appear to be the underlying motive in individual pursuit, with charity, love, and pride taking a backseat. As a people we have to get our priorities in order, recognizing that not everyone can or should be wealthy or a celebrity. We must be honest and accept that love is most important, and that love means giving, not taking and destroying. Only death and the graveyard takes in everything and gives up nothing. To be human means that while it's great to receive gifts, truly you get a better feeling giving than you do receiving.

EMOTIONALLY MOTIVATED

SINCE I HAD been to O.P. before, I was not as apprehensive about being there again. I remembered, and had been remembered by guards, as well as other prisoners; those who had remained confined while I got out, others that I had met on the streets after my release, and still others who, like me, had gotten out and caught a new case or had been returned for parole violation. My main concern upon arriving was securing some financial help from the outside. I knew I could not call on any of my family, and I had given up writing Patricia when she refused to reply to several letters I sent her. I began writing to anyone whose address I could get my hands on, concentrating especially on Christians and single women whose addresses I got from other prisoners, newspapers and magazines, and a

variety of pen pal and friendship clubs that I wrote to. It was important I thought, to find someone not aware of my past, and with whom I could start fresh.

In my letters to potential friends I felt compelled to disclose my race and the fact of my incarceration in each initial letter. I had learned from other prisoners who had not been forthcoming about those things in writing new friends only to lose that correspondence when those things were revealed. I reasoned that any reply I received would be from people who had already accepted the most negatively perceived social things about me. I also made it a practice in evoking sympathy to deny having any family or friends, and I strongly emphasized never knowing my real mother, with claims of being tossed around during my childhood from relative to relative, who felt obligated to take me, but as I assured my friends, none of whom truly wanted me. I convinced myself that Christians would likely have more compassion and empathy for me, and that I would better be able to manipulate them for help.

Most of the people I wrote did not reply, and some who did, expressed that they did not want to associate themselves with a prisoner. There were even Christians and organizations that sent tracts, form letters, assuring me of God's love, encouraging me to seek the kingdom of God first, promising to keep me in prayer, but none would help with my needs. I had already begun studying the Bible diligently, reading it through in its entirety several times, and longing to find what the secret was, why some people clearly undeserving and worse than I were blessed with much more love and wealth. I wanted God's blessing. I wanted to win His favor. As a result, I memorized Scripture verses and in the process, learned to quote verbatim whole chapters in the book of James. I refined my introductory letters to request a good study Bible, and not too long

afterwards I began to get some good responses. I first heard from an elderly woman named Elsie May, who lived in a small town in Pennsylvania. She was not exactly what I had in mind as far as friendship or communicating. She was a very committed Christian who quickly made it a habit of sending me greeting cards daily, in which she described her day, what she ate, and other things I considered insignificant. At first I wrote her letters disclosing my frustration with being in prison, not having a woman, and other concerns, but I soon accepted that my complaints and pleas pretty much fell on deaf ears to a woman with whom Christ was sufficient for everything.

At about the same time I met a young married Christian couple. Don and Joanne had two sons and were avidly seeking a Christian ministry, being encouraged by Joanne struggling as a professional Christian singer, and more importantly to me, they were also managers of a small motel in Ohio, which I entertained as making them financially able to assist me. They both got involved in ministering to me and were very sincere and loving in writing. I questioned them about many things, including women, and I learned a great deal about Christianity in the process. So much so, that I could and did argue with Scripture towards my own selfishness. Admittedly. I complained a lot about my aloneness and not having a mate, challenging them to help me find someone, and expressing doubts about God and their own concern for me because of my lacking one. I played on their guilt by threatening to pay a prostitute when I got out, just as I had with Patricia.

Women were as much a mystery to me at that time as they had ever been. I felt that a woman must surely have to love a man to have sex with him. I could not realistically conceive of women doing such human things as having a bowel movement or needing sex and love as I did. In fact, I was still rather

fascinated by a youthful memory of my sister who often played with and sniffed her genitals under her clothing while talking on the phone or watching television. Nor could I figure out my own insatiable sexuality with masturbation, but failing to impotency when I had the opportunity. I found self-gratification in fantasy, anticipating my eventual release from prison, more anxious to see new X-rated films than I was to actually meet and have sex with a woman.

After corresponding with Don and his wife for a month or so, during which time I kept Elsie's writing me a secret, I received a visit from them. Unfortunately, their visit came at a time when I was confined in a segregation unit for some long forgotten reason, and therefore I was limited to a one hour handcuffed visit. I was not as happy to see Don and his family as I was to receive the package they brought, containing a Thompson-Chain Reference Bible, gym shoes, towels, underwear, toilet articles, and a much desired AM-FM cassette player. I was very pleased with myself, feeling as though I had accomplished something, and even more so because the gifts were of better quality than I could have expected. I felt only mild guilt that my personal needs and wants were more important to me than the Christian family that brought them, and admittedly, God.

We continued to correspond after I was classified and transferred to the London Correctional Institution, but I could not expect more from them besides correspondence because of what they had already given. As much as I wanted to ask them for money to shop weekly at the commissary, I did not, but I was successful at winning Don's promise that whenever I got out of prison he would send me some clothes, so I continued to write them towards that end. Prior to their helping me I did not consider that once those wants were met, they would be

replaced by others. It never truly ended.

The prison in London is for the most part a work farm, well-known among Ohio prisoners for its two-hundred plus men's dorms, fresh milk that acts as a laxative on new city reared prisoners, melted peanut butter and large sweet rolls for weekend breakfast, and of course its farm gangs. Upon my arrival with other prisoners, we were isolated from the general prison population in a receiving unit for new inmates. While there, I accidentally dropped a corner of a foot locker on my foot, causing a gash that quickly became infected. It was not until I went to the prison hospital for treatment of the infection that I nonchalantly mentioned that my head persisted in itching no matter how often I scratched, and it was discovered that I had head lice.

I had been hopeful to be classified to the college program as a work assignment, however, I learned prior to leaving the receiving unit that I had been assigned to one of the farm gangs. The job assignment, injuring my foot, head lice, and my cocky youthfulness motivated me to refuse the job assignment. The consequences of my doing so resulted in my being deemed a disciplinary problem and put in the "hole" for fifteen days. In the hole my behavior only worsened. London's reputation for feeding well, obviously did not extend to its segregation unit where each breakfast consisted of one bowl of cereal and two slices of plain white bread. My continued refusal of the job assignment after fifteen days in the hole earned me an additional fifteen days, with a recommendation for an institutional transfer. During the latter fifteen days I threw a food tray out of my cell because of its small portions, and that netted me a handcuffed and shackled trip across the prison yard to the Deputy Warden's office. First he angrily stuck his finger in my defenseless face while calling me "Billy Bad Ass," and when I

was not intimidated he pleadingly counseled me to maintain a semblance of good behavior, promising that my compliance would get me on the very next bus leaving London.

Unknowingly, it was my thought that I would be returned to O.P. and re-classified to another of Ohio's prisons. However, at the time London was diverting most of its alleged disciplinary problem prisoners directly to Ohio's maximum security prison at Lucasville, near Portsmouth. My two to ten years sentence, past convictions, immediate conviction, or my then institutional behavior did not righteously warrant my being sent to Lucasville. Nevertheless, that is where I went, truly afraid because of the dangerous guys I had briefly encountered at O.P. who had been classified to Lucasville, and the many stories I had heard about the place. When I did arrive I behaved myself accordingly, being obedient to officers orders while trying to be as inconspicuous as possible, and not flinch or buckle from the stares and comments of officers or inmates.

I did not have any major problems at Lucasville. In fact, I found it to be a better place to serve time, in the respect that there were more older prisoners, and therefore less game playing. Shortly after arriving I was introduced to a much older black guy out of Cleveland, and serving a life sentence. He worked in the prison shoe factory, and because of my experience sewing gloves in federal prison I was able to get assigned there, where I worked on a sewing machine making prison issue boots. He also agreed to allow me to be his cellmate, which I was interested in because of his having a television in the cell.

I also began seeking new pen friends, though I still wrote Elsie May, Don and his wife. I wanted and tried desperately to find someone that would send me money regularly, especially a woman who might also visit me. Meeting such a woman con-

tinued to prove impossible for me, however, I was again blessed by winning the friendship of another Christian couple. Dan and Judy were childless, she a social worker and he a biologist living in Juneau, Alaska, in a home without many modern conveniences in their efforts to have a closer life with Christ.

My release from prison was scheduled sooner than I had expected. I had only been in Lucasville a few months before being summoned to the institution parole officer's office. There I was informed that I had been granted a parole by minutes sent down from the central office, and that I would not have to actually go before the parole board. Unfortunately, my actually getting released proved to be a problem because of my not having any place to go. The state of Ohio, as I would assume other states also, does not release a paroled prisoner to the streets without verification that they have some place to stay. To do so would be tantamount to granting unspoken permission for that person to rob or steal to make ends meet.

In my case, I simply had no place to go. The few halfway houses that I wrote to in Cleveland rejected me for not successfully completing their programs in the past, and in other Ohio cities where I sought acceptance, it was policy that they only accepted prisoners who had been committed to prison from their respective counties. My family would not accept me, though I had no inclination to ask. During this time I became very bitter in my heart, hating even more my aloneness. I was especially angry because essentially all I needed was for any adult in my family to merely say that I could stay with them just so that I could be released. I did not think it unreasonable to expect people who should care a little something about you, to tell a lie for your freedom. I reasoned that even if I got out and became a bum in the gutter, at least I would get to choose my own gutter. In prison I had no choices. If I

had not realized it before, my circumstances made it clear to me then that I was in no way loved, cared about, or wanted. I remained in prison for approximately six months beyond the time I could have been released had I had some place to go.

In July 1982, the State of Ohio arranged my acceptance at a state contracted halfway house in Columbus. Dan and Judy sent used clothing, as well as the Christian couple in Ohio. I was determined to find work and make good on the outside. As it was, in just a few days I was smoking reefer and drinking wine with other residents there. Security and monitoring residents' movements were very poor, to the extent that late at night some guys would sneak out and return hours later undetected. Whenever I could steal time away from the facility I went to an X-rated movie theater in nearby Bexley, a Columbus suburb. Seeing and hearing the sights and sound of explicit obscene sex was the ultimate in sex for me. It was a secret that I kept well guarded from others because I was also somewhat ashamed. I felt that my fantasies and desires, while not kinky, dangerous, or painful, were still becoming more and more perverse. Even when I was befriended by several young Christian guys who visited the halfway house and were sponsored by various families affiliated with a Christian ministry program. I managed to enjoy ten to twenty X-rated movies per week. Pete, Jeff, and Smitty (with whom I was closest) encouraged me to attend church with them, which I did on several occasions. I once even spent the night with them at a sponsoring family's home, which I thought was an unusual show of trust. In associating myself with these Christians I did not believe that they truly cared about me, but rather that they were solely interested in claiming me as another notch in their Christian gunbelt of saved souls. Still, I had some good times with them, including my first ever motorcycle ride on Pete's

bike. He took me up to Hoover Dam, and I found the ride to be very exciting and exhilarating, but the height and water of the dam were terrifying.

While at the halfway house I also ran into a guy name Karl on the streets, whom I had known while in federal prison. We began to spend some time together, mostly getting high. I felt uncomfortable visiting his home that he shared with the older black woman he married and her daughters. My overall behavior at the facility was not ideal, and eventually resulted in my being kicked out, even though I had no place to go. My pride would not allow me to seek a bed at the city mission, as was suggested to me by others, so I took to living from hand to mouth again. At first I followed Karl's lead and tried my hand at shoplifting from downtown department stores, but after getting caught once, I turned to breaking into houses. Before too long I was arrested at the Greyhound Bus station by a black police officer who singled me out for looking unlike a patron, but loitering in one of the television chairs. He commanded me to move on, but not liking the mumbled comments under my breath while doing so, he decided to arrest me. Despite my complaints that I was innocent of doing any wrong, he was angry. After handcuffing me he took me to a rear security office where he proceeded to explain and demonstrate on me physically how tough he was. My subsequent complaints when I arrived at the booking desk fell on deaf ears, and I was in fact charged with resisting arrest and assaulting him, though he weighed at least twice what I did.

My efforts in pursuing charges against him proved fruitless, being hindered and discouraged at every turn. Surprisingly, a female attorney appointed to my case seemed to believe me and encouraged me to take the case all the way to a jury trial. I hoped at the trial that the facts would come out, but my

refusal to plea bargain only angered the court. It was the only time in my life that I had a jury trial, but still it brought me no justice despite the officer's testimony being full of lies and contradictions differing from the report he had written, in addition to indications that he had prior accusations of police brutality.

As a result of a series of misdemeanor charges, including a case involving petty theft charges from a downtown department store, I was sentenced to the workhouse shortly after that trial. While in the workhouse and again needing outside support, I got in touch with the young Christian guys that I had met at the halfway house, and Dan and Judy in Alaska. They all of course encouraged me to seek to change my life with God, and I continued to learn more about the Scriptures, but wavered internally because of my coveting material things and sexual fantasy.

My articulation and oratorical skills were being made manifest to me during this period because of a challenge from a deputy sheriff working at the jail. He challenged myself and any other prisoner to learn, memorize and quote one of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Sonnets from the Portuguese. I was the only person to do so successfully. My ability to speak well proved a useful attribute with making friends, as guys would often gather around as I talked of my experiences, the people I met and knew from many imprisonments, and even the knowledge I had about God.

During the Christmas holiday I was allowed a day's leave from the workhouse. I arranged with Smitty and his roommate Scott to stay at their off-campus apartment. Smitty was working a sales job while Scott and two other roommates attended Ohio State. As a Christmas gift from them I received a shirt and tie. I was very grateful for their friendship and

trust, however, in the beginning of 1983 when I was released from the workhouse, Dan and Judy sent me some warm clothing and a check for four hundred dollars, which I turned over to Smitty and Scott for safe keeping. When I demanded the money days later only to have Smitty reluctant to comply out of concern for my best interest, I got angry and hit him. Scott remained a friend, but after that, my friendship with Smitty was pretty much over.

I was successful at getting a job as a painter, finding it to be work that I very much enjoyed doing. But during my free time I hung out with Karl and Peter Lynn (a guy whom I had met in the workhouse). Together we got high a great deal, frequented a lot of nightclubs, having reasoned at that point in my life that such places were the only way that I could at least be in close proximity to females. Despite having a job, I wasted what money I earned buying drugs, and I did not feel that I was getting anywhere, so I began stealing again. I still concentrated on breaking into cars, but I also began breaking into houses, where I figured more money could be made. I was pretty successful at it for several months. I even thought that I was good at it, because I never attempted to break into any home when there was any indication that someone might be present. I was never encountered by anyone after breaking into a home, and I tried to limit my crimes to Bexley, other suburbs, and the college campus area where I believed whites dominated and had more valuables than blacks.

Everyone who knew me knew I was a thief and accepted it, in part because I sold a lot of things to them cheaply. The only person who was seemingly down on me was Karl's wife. She also had two young daughters, one of whom had a child, and another who I was attracted to. I was afraid to approach her about a relationship because I feared her rejection. I sensed

that while outwardly people accepted my stealing, this girl whom I was attracted to secretly frowned upon me as not being good enough for her. Personally, I felt that all my friends were using me, but my desire to have a social life and not be alone encouraged me to accept it. I also enjoyed the reputation I held as Peter Lynn's partner because he seemed to know and be known by everyone.

One night I broke into a home in Bexley, and finding nothing of pocket-size value to steal, I stole two televisions and a car that was parked in a garage attached to the house, having also found the keys. I quickly drove back inside the Columbus city limits and to Peter Lynn's house where I sold the televisions very cheaply to some of his relatives. Afterwards, I went back to where I had stashed the car, thinking with regret that in the rush and excitement I had sold the televisions foolishly cheap, so I decided to try to sell the car or the tires from it if I could. Frustrated with an unsuccessful hour with no sale, I turned the corner and pulled in front of Peter's house only to have the police pull behind me. I jumped out and threw the keys, but was seen doing so. I was charged with receiving stolen property, in addition to a parole detainer lodged against me the very next day. In jail and sober, I accepted that I had not reclaimed the car as much to sell it, as I had simply to be seen driving it.

No matter what jail I was in I always managed to get by, because of my knowledge and experience. In talking with other prisoners about my experiences in prisons, it gave me the chance to do some name dropping, ideally to find someone with whom we both knew. That would give us something in common, and if that person we both knew was someone that they envied or were afraid of, it would be to my advantage, especially if I could show I was cool with that person. Experi-

ence had also taught me what was coveted in jail, how to barter, and what to hoard to get the things I needed. I knew how to intimidate and how not to be intimidated. I also knew who to seek friendship with and who to avoid. Jail inmates who were anticipating going to prison were full of question and eager to hear what I had to say. My knowledge and experience compensated for my small stature and my not being a physical fighter at heart.

While in jail this time, I was hopeful that somehow I would get a break and be released. I was held in an eight-man cell on the seventh floor with mostly black inmates, except for one white guy. Everyone liked him, due in part to his having a connection to get reefer in. A day or so after I arrived however, he was removed from the cell and replaced with another young white guy, claiming to have been transferred from a suburban jail for setting a cell on fire. From the onset I perceived him as an overbearing game player. The tales he told were inconsistent, and among other things he was having difficulty with his grandmother or other family member accepting his calls. But as prisoners living together are apt to do, one black inmate tried to help him by arranging for him to call his family through a three-way phone service. Still, he was not someone I wanted to befriend. There was no reason in particular, though he did insult me by repeatedly asking me questions which he apparently already knew the answers to, in an attempt to engage me in conversation. I eventually made it clear by ignoring him to the point of rudeness that I would not be his friend.

When I awoke from a nap the second afternoon the new white prisoner had been moved there, I was to learn that he had been taken to the hospital. When he returned, the story he shared was that while doing exercises with another prison-

er he had fell and hurt his mouth. He explained further that while on the elevator going to the hospital, the deputy sheriffs escorting him, not believing he had truly fallen doing exercises, questioned him as to which of us black prisoners had hurt him. He claimed to have stuck by his story, however, the following day, late in the evening, he had again been removed from the cell. Shortly after that, myself and three other prisoners were put in the hole. I was subsequently charged with rape, and each of the other three with complicity to rape. The white prisoner was released from jail.

We were appointed attorneys and allowed out of the hole the very next day. The counsel appointed to me was a well known Columbus attorney, highly experienced, and honestly believed in me. After hearing my side of the story and thereafter having me to testify before the grand jury, no indictment was returned. Nevertheless, I was angry about the injustice done to me, especially since I thought the white guy's sole purpose to gain his release from jail was blatantly obvious.

In the new eight-man cell I was confined to, there was another white guy with whom I wound up receiving a blessing through. He was a tall good-looking young guy who constantly boasted to the rest of us in the cell about the women he had and his ability to pimp them. He was particularly boastful of a young black girl name Sherrie. Over and over I tried to persuade him to let me talk to her whenever he had her on the phone, and after several days he relented. I was twenty-five at the time, and because she was considerably younger I felt bold enough to be frank in communicating with her. I inquired of her relationship with the white guy, and she assured me that it was not at all like he portrayed it to be. I made it clear to her that I was looking for a relationship with a good woman, and was pleased to hear that she had similar hopes. In just a matter

of days she would only accept calls from me.

Sherrie was a ball of confusion and frustration for me. As the days passed with me calling daily in an attempt to learn more about her, I often spoke with her girlfriend and her brother when she was not at home. Through them I was led to believe that she was very promiscuous. Initially, she had lied to me about her age, but later admitted to being just seventeen and the mother of a not quite year-old son. She was very close to her mother, who had enrolled her in a private school for girls, and her son was a result of her involvement with a guy who gave her reefer. She lived in an East Columbus housing project receiving welfare, and though she claimed not to have any one of the steady boyfriends that her girlfriend and brother told me she had, she did concede to having a "sugar daddy," a then sixty-three year old black man who gave her money and furniture for her apartment, and in exchange she allowed him to perform oral sex on her. As much as I disliked that situation, I reasoned to her that I would accept it because I was not in a position to help her in any way, and I believed her assurance that she was not in love with him, but simply used him.

She also gave me a phone credit card number to use in calling her. I also took advantage of it by calling almost everyone I knew, including my brother Paul who was at the time living in Little Rock, Arkansas. He was supposedly running an auto painting service and married to a girl named Mary whom I have never met. I had not been in touch with him since he and Denise had taken my money and personal belongings. When I called him occasionally from the jail I never brought up past issues, and secretly envied his always seeming to be more responsible and having his life in better order than I.

July 3, 1983 was a pretty lonely day in jail for me. Sherrie had traveled with her mother to visit a grandmother for the

holiday, and most of the other guys in the cell were receiving visits. As I usually did when loneliness plagued me, I considered what my life might have been had I known my mother. These thoughts led to me reassessing the information I knew about her, such as her name as Wanda Marshall on my birth certificate, and my thinking of the name of Roberta Flack (a black singer) whenever I thought of my grandmother living in Coalwood. Using the phone credit card number I sought operator assistance for information. I called Yonkers, New York and Bluefield, West Virginia, places that I had heard over the years where my mother might be living, as well as Coalwood. There was no listing for my mother's maiden name in either of those cities. It was not until I had frustrated all my efforts that I got back on the phone with the information operator for Coalwood and asked what I considered stupid, if she had a listing for Roberta Flack. She responded that she did not, but that she - did have a listing for a Bertha Flack. I knew before dialing again that I had located my grandmother.

As I tried to contain my excitement when the phone was answered by an obviously elderly lady, I asked if she would be patient with me for a moment because I thought she might be my grandmother. She eagerly questioned me by calling out the nicknames of my brother Paul and I. Not wanting to share with her my immediately being in jail, she proved just as anxious to talk to me, informing me of much that I had not previously known. Not only did she have and give me my mother's phone number, but she also gave me the names and numbers of unknown half-sisters and a half-brother whose names I distinctly remembered from childhood. Knowing then that my mother lived in White Plains, New York and that she was married and living under her married name of Wanda Lee Williams, I hung up on my grandmother, promising to call

her again soon. I was elated, thinking that I was then armed with information that would change my life for the better, and give me the support I would need while in prison.

I began by calling my half-sisters living in Delaware, Michigan, West Virginia, and surprisingly my half-brother and a half-sister living right there in Columbus. The story I was able to put together from them was that my mother was married to their father, who was also a good friend of my own father. Their family consisted of the four girls and one boy. While their father was at work my father was apparently having an affair with our mother. When she discovered that she was pregnant with Paul she began teaching the oldest children how to care for the younger, and against my father's wishes she left her kids one day while her husband was at work, following my father to Youngstown, Ohio where he had taken a job, and where Paul, myself, and perhaps my real sister Celestine were born. It is unclear when they separated or if they had ever been married, but clearly my mother raised Celestine while my father eventually got Paul and I from our grandmother.

I learned from one of my half-sisters that my mother had been aware of my letter to the Red Cross and trying to locate her while in federal prison. She is alleged to have mentioned it to this sister who asked to have the letter, but rather than do so, she tore it up. Everyone I spoke to seemed very receptive towards me, and held a dislike towards our mother. It was even suggested at one point that my mother had stolen money or property belonging to the children, and that most had no contact with her, and did not desire any. I was told repeatedly that she is a very wealthy woman, and not the kind of loving person she pretends to be. She had apparently married a man who owns a construction company, raising a daughter and son with him, in addition to Celestine. Although it was told to me over

and over again, I did not want to believe that her immediate family was the only family she truly cared anything about.

When I actually spoke with my mother it was very hard to believe all the bad things my siblings said about her. The half-sister and brother living in Columbus came to visit me at the jail the next day and shared with me that they had went to New York to meet and visit our mother. Still, they were evasive in giving any details about themselves or her, though they did substantiate that she was wealthy and lived in a virtual mansion. To me my mother was as receptive as the others, as I poured out my life and frustrations to her. She assured me that I would not be alone anymore, and that I now had a family. She claimed to be a devoted Christian woman whose household served the Lord. A few of my sisters claimed that she was religious to the point of being fanatical, attending church every day of the week, and at least twice on Sundays. My mother even hinted at my relocating to New York to start over with her after my release from prison. One notable incident that irked me was her insisting that my father was dead, despite my assuring her that he was very much alive. Nevertheless, she promised me that she would write and help me while I was in prison.

As for my sister Celestine, she was not at all receptive to me over the phone. I sensed a reluctance to speak with me. Married to a guy in law enforcement, and living in Richmond Hills, New York, she attends the same church as my mother, and I gather with equal frequency. In an attempt to know what they looked like, I took the liberty of sending them the only photo I had of myself from a State of Ohio identification card. My mother did send me several photos of herself and her son there, but they have since been lost, and I cannot remember exactly what she looks like. Celestine never complied to send any photos.

I was pleased to call my brother and share with him that I had located our mother and siblings that I previously had no knowledge of. I thought perhaps it would draw he and I closer. Sherrie was also happy for me to hear the news when she returned from her holiday visit. Days later she visited me at the jail and I was strongly attracted to her. Like me, she was small and slim. She had the look of the little girl that she was, a look she would likely carry throughout her life. She was small breasted, dark-skinned, with an incredibly sexy overbite. I made a conscious decision at that time that I would love her and try to keep her to myself.

During one of her later visits to the jail she fainted, and days later admitted that she was pregnant with her second child. At the time her mother had no knowledge of it, and she feared her response if she found out, though both her girlfriend and brother knew. She claimed not to know who the father was, though speculated about several guys with whom she had denied to me any relationship with. She talked of trying to raise the money for an abortion, which she claimed to have had when she was fourteen. I would have helped her if I could, even being strongly against it, and later learning that she knew her pregnancy was too far advanced when she suggested it.

As a result of the felony charges against me, I received another one to five year sentence, giving me an aggregated sentence of three to fifteen years, in addition to again being a parole violator. When I left the jail for prison it was without knowing who the father of Sherrie's baby was, but having her promise that she would stick with me and wait for my release, I had also given my mother a list of things I would need in prison which she promised to send in a package. I was again sent to O.P. where I was to be classified to another of Ohio's prisons. I began receiving greeting cards from Sherrie almost

immediately, but no word from any one else. Though I wrote to my new siblings whose addresses I did have and who had promised on the phone that they would write, no one ever did. Through Sherrie, however, I did begin to correspond with her sister who claimed to have found Christ while then confined at Ohio's women's prison in Marysville. Sherrie's writing to me came to an abrupt halt shortly after that introduction.

When the package did finally arrive from my mother I was pleased but nonetheless bewildered because I had yet to get a letter from her. The things she sent me in the package were great, and I was especially proud to wear them and tell the story to others prisoners of how I came about getting them, including a typewriter which I was not permitted to receive while in O.P., but had to be returned. I was to hear from my sister in Columbus after I got out of prison that my mother claimed that I sent the typewriter back to her all tore up. I was angry that my mother would accuse me of such, and especially where I could not defend myself. The fact is that if a prisoner receives something that they are not allowed to have, it is returned without ever having been in their possession. A week or so after getting the package I got a letter from my mother in which she explained her religious convictions as well as that "...all of my children are grown. I do not interfere in their lives, and will not tolerate them interfering in mine."

I was more than shocked. I was hurt and confused. I could not figure out what I had said or done wrong. I could not envision someone having claimed such dedication to Christ with such an attitude against her own son. It disrupted my own understanding of Christianity, and later reinforced all the negative beliefs that I held towards women. I wondered if Paul contacted her and said or did something wrong. If he told her bad things about me, or if it was simply me. I reasoned for her

how convenient it was for her now that her first two sets of children were grown, but what excuse did she maintain when we were young and without her. I continued to write only to have my letters to her ignored.

With Sherrie, I resolved to accept that she had likely gotten involved with some other guy. Her letters to me were few and far between, and without any detail, often simply ignoring questions I asked in my own letters. Sometime later after I was transferred to the prison in Marion, one of my step-sisters wrote and gave me the address of an overweight black girl living in Anawalt, West Virginia. We began corresponding and she began sending me money orders in addition to writing regularly. While I appreciated her writing, I merely used her. I really did not have any intentions of fulfilling the promises of a relationship that I made to her. At one point, even my half-sister in Columbus sent me a food package, though not without putting a lot of guilt on me for the sacrifice she made, having four kids to feed herself. However, she was the only person of my newly discovered family who wrote, and even accepted my once monthly phone calls even though I often had nothing to talk about. Unfortunately, after my half-brother had visited me at the jail I never heard anything else from him, though I wrote him several times from prison and inquired of my half-sister about him. She remained as evasive about him as she did about our mother, expressing that our mother's behavior did not affect her as it seemed to affect others.

Approaching the end of this confinement I was allowed to be transferred to the Marion prison honor camp. There, I worked on a farm gang that did gardening. Through another prisoner whom I became close to there, I met a girl who wrote, visited, and once sent me a small sundry package. By the time I was released from prison on furlough in October

1984 my thumb was so green I could plant a hubcap and grow a Cadillac. I was very happy been granted a furlough when I reached the center in downtown Columbus.

My sister had made it clear to me before I left prison that I could not expect any help from her financially in getting on my feet. When I arrived at the center I phoned a half-sister living in Detroit to see if she would be willing to send me a pair of jeans. Other than phoning my half-sister in Columbus, I did not bother to ask her for anything. One of the first things I did do was get in touch with Sherrie, having quickly forgotten the promises I had made to the two other girls who had been hopeful of a relationship with me, seeing only that Sherrie was there. I learned right away that she was involved with a guy who not only beat her, but often took her welfare money. For a time she kept me on an emotional roller coaster. We would be talking on the phone for hours sometimes, and she would swear for her own good that she would have nothing else to do with the guy, but then he would come over amid our conversation and she would hang up the phone without apology or explanation. This happened many times, convincing me that nothing occurred, with little I could do because of the restrictions at the center that she was aware of. Among other things, I had to have permission to go anywhere, not allowed out at night unless working, and when I was out, my movements were monitored by phone. Eventually, with her mother's encouragement and assistance, Sherrie began legal action to keep the guy away from her.

Thereafter she began visiting me at the center, and whenever I could, I would visit her apartment. My love for her grew each time I saw her, even when I found out that her youngest son's father was definitely the sugar daddy whom she claimed only performed oral sex on her. I secured a job as a dishwash-

er at a downtown restaurant, and was also granted a fifteen hour pass to visit Sherrie and the boys for Thanksgiving holiday. It was on that day that I lost my virginity. When I reflect upon my successfully having sex with Sherrie and yet failed with other women before, I conclude that it was because she was less uninhibited than any girl I knew before. She was not ashamed of her body. She freely allowed me to look, touch, and experiment. I was so happy, and proudly boasted to Scott afterwards, my having made love to a woman. Unfortunately, I could not be with Sherrie as much as I wanted to, and I suspect that my inexperience with sex was not very satisfying to her. I felt that she loved me and that our relationship was growing, but I never felt that she was completely open and honest with me. As unrealistic as it seems now, I wanted and asked her to marry me, but she remained undecided. I was in love with her, and all I wanted was to make her happy.

Misfortune stood at the door for me when several weeks before Christmas I was moved to a furlough center on the west side of Columbus. Each man at the center was allowed to submit a seventy-two hour pass request to be with family for the holiday. I considered only Sherrie because my half-sister and I were still not very close, and there simply was no one else for me. My pass request was denied, it was said because Sherrie was not considered a family member. I was very angry because the staff at the center knew well my family situation, as well as the fact that Sherrie was the only person who visited me there. On Christmas Eve night most of the residents of the center were already gone on pass, except for myself and those few residents who had arrived at the center after pass request were submitted. I was very sad and depressed as I talked with Sherrie over the phone. She and the boys were at her mother's house where they had gathered to open presents and

celebrate the holiday. Roughly a half-hour before midnight I decided to sneak out of the center, where I caught a cab to her mother's home.

Truly I was more concerned with pleasing her than with my own situation. I did not want to lose her. At about three o'clock Christmas morning her brother dropped me off back at the center, and I snuck back in the same way I had snuck out, hoping that my absence had not be noticed. All of Christmas day nothing was said or done to me, however, the day following, early in the morning I was handcuffed and returned to Marion where I served a whole year before I got out of prison again. I was never questioned about where I had gone because obviously everyone knew. I felt as though I was being unjustly punished for not having any family, and for a long time I found it difficult to be sympathetic with victims of crimes for being convinced that I was in the bed of those criminals.

During my time in prison for furlough violation I began writing to Sherrie, Scott, and Elsie May. I shared with Sherrie my dreams for a child of my own, a daughter, with whom I could name Abigail, which I discovered from the Bible to mean "a father's joy." Sherrie wrote to me of leaning towards involvement with the Jehovah's Witnesses, to which I shared with her my convictions of it being little more than a religious cult. The important thing I thought was that she was showing an interest in salvation, which those Christian couples I had befriended in the past considered me beyond. After having been in prison a few months, I was able to persuade Scott to bring Sherrie and the boys to visit me. She only visited me that once, and to my anger and disappointment, arrived less than a half-hour before visiting hours were over. Her writing again slacked off after that, which I again accepted as her having gotten involved with another man. I had come to believe

that she was not the type of girl who could do without a man being with her for any significant length of time.

Shortly before I was to be released from prison I was able to get in touch with my step-sister Donna, and sought her help in finding some place to be paroled to. At the time she was living in a housing project with her four kids, receiving welfare benefits. She had no room to take me in herself. She did help me to get in touch with our sister Darnella, who agreed to tell the parole officer when they came questioning about my parole placement, that I could stay with her. I also asked Elsie May for a five hundred dollar "loan" which I had every intention of repaying, but as I explained to her, I could not exactly say when. She did lend me the money, and gave me the name of a minister in Cleveland to look up, who she thought might be able to assist me.

It was a snowy and cold day when I got out of prison. I had a difficult time locating my sister's house, and as a result I stayed in the streets until the following day. When I did get in touch with her personally, she informed me that I could not stay with her for any long period of time because of her landlord. She merely said that I could stay with her to get me out of prison. During the few days I stayed with her I followed up on Elsie May's lead. The minister I was intended to meet was retired, but his replacement, an Episcopalian minister name Reverend Betts proved to be a wonderful blessing. He and his small dog Charlie, a poodle, were staying in the church rectory. It was a very big house, and as Reverend Betts was acting only as a temporary minister, the home was not often occupied. He and his wife maintained a home in Cincinnati where he commuted to at least once a week, though she sometimes came up to visit him. He was a vegetarian. His kindness to me was incalculable. He allowed me to move into the rectory

with him. I was given a key to the house, a room of my own, food, and could pretty much come and go as I pleased. For work initially, I used the church's snow plow to earn money doing private drives, after cleaning areas of the church. I came and went in the church offices without question, becoming friends with the secretary and her husband. I was not asked to contribute anything to the household, and I deeply regret defecating on his goodness.

In exchange for his kindness, I stole from him. I also ran up his phone bill with frequent calls to Sherrie. After having traveled to Columbus by bus several times to visit her, Reverend Betts began dropping me off in Columbus when he went home to Cincinnati. Not long after I was living with him there was a break-in at the church, and the church computer was stolen. Being aware that I had stolen personal items from his bedroom, the reverend held me as the prime suspect. By that time I had already informed my parole officer of my desire to relocate to Columbus where I had a place to stay, and might better be able to find work. He okayed it that I should go for a week to stay, and if after that week I still wanted to move there, he would put it into effect. Sherrie had no knowledge of the computer theft, nor did the police ever question me, but I know they had been there because I saw where fingerprints had been dusted on the office doors. I was not concerned about that because I had permission to be in the offices, but I still did not want my parole officer to get wind of the incident because he would see me as guilty simply for being in any way involved with the church. Reverend Betts made it clear to me after that that I would have to find someplace else to stay, sharing with me that he was sure I had committed the crime. When I did leave for Columbus, it was Reverend Betts that took me and with much regrets on both our parts, dropped me off.

My moving in with Sherrie was wholly my idea. Having never had a driver's license in my life, she rode with me as I drove back to Cleveland to inform my parole officer that I still wanted to reside in Columbus. We reported there together. Sherrie was at the time living in her mother's home, spending a lot of the time that she was not in school working for her mother, who by vocation is a beautician, has also derived a long time income from the state for the care of two mentally ill women who live in the home. Her mother rents and maintains an apartment in a Columbus suburb, and paid Sherrie to monitor the ladies when they are at home. Sherrie also had an apartment through the state welfare agency because of her children, in which she paid a set small amount of rent. While not actually living in the apartment she rented it for illegal profit to another woman.

With me relocating to Columbus Sherrie insisted that the woman move out immediately so that we could move in. This was of course to her mother's dislike because she would have to find someone else to watch the ladies, and with family like Sherrie she did not have to pay as much. However, Sherrie's brother Greg and his girlfriend who had an apartment on the other side of town decided that they would keep their apartment, but move into their mother's home to watch the ladies. Greg and I got along well. He enjoyed smoking reefer, which we did a great deal together. Sherrie and I also visited her sister who had written me in prison, and who was then out and in a drug center in Columbus. Sherrie, with my agreement also decided to take in her sisters son instead of leaving him with the State's Children's Services Agency.

Sherrie labeled me a "honeydew" man, explaining that all she need do was request, "honey do this, or honey do that," and I would do it. Still, she was very hard to satisfy. Typi-

cally, when there were disagreements between us, she would insist that I leave the home, in which case, I would stay at her brother's unused apartment. I was given a key by him after the first time she put me out. Whenever she got upset she viewed things as "hers" and "mine," not ours. She claimed to have done everything that a person could do sexually, and consequently was growing tired of sex. The sex between us was far too infrequent for my liking, and then only at her desire. We attended church services together, leading to my being baptized, in my own efforts to lead the Christian life she was beginning to insist upon. I took a job with the Northland Jaycees in Columbus, doing phone sales. She complained that I was not making enough money. When I took another part time job with the Fraternal Order of Police doing similar telemarketing work, she complained that I was away from home too much, and there was no one to watch the boys while she, about to graduate from nursing school, began to take on work with a temporary employment agency. To my further disappointment, the father of her youngest son continued to pursue her, coming by the house, and offering her money.

I strived to do the best I could to please her. The two part-time jobs were seasonal work, so when they came to an end I worked for a time at Wendy's, again during a time that she had kicked me out of the house and I was living at her brother's apartment. I also began to attend a different church, led by a minister with whom I was developing a friendship with. Out of my association with him, I acquired a job with a young black man who was attempting to run a hauling company. Sherrie complained that she did not want a dirty man, one that worked in dirt and rubbish. She complained that she wanted a man who could take her places in his own car, not hers. I envied the discovery that her former sugar daddy

drove a Cadillac. Truly, what activities we pursued were those she planned, and I would not challenge her. She did not even agree to my having a social life with other guys outside of her brother.

One Sunday morning, after having watched the boys all night while she worked, she came home and told me that she wanted me to drop her and the boys off at her mother's where she would do the laundry. She asked me to pick her up around six o'clock that evening, and that in the meantime I could take the car and spend some time with the boys. Up until that point I had been stopping by Peter Lynn's house without her knowledge, for short periods to drink beer and smoke reefer. Although Sherrie knew I did the same with her brother, she always made it clear that she did not think too highly of it, or my cigarette smoking, for she had for years then, given up getting high. So, on this particular day, off to Peter Lynn's house I went, where I drank quite a few beers.

When I arrived at her mother's house it was well past ten o'clock. She was extremely angry, refusing to let me in the house and insisting upon having both her car and house keys. I was just high enough not to put up with any more of her selfishness and lack of understanding, and in turn, agreed that she could have her keys, but after I went to the apartment to remove my belongings. I was fed up with being asked to leave every time she got angry, and was determined to make that the last time. However, to do as I wanted would take the sadistic pleasure from her of putting me between a rock and a hard place, in not being able to eat or change clothes from work to play. That provoked her to call the police, and when they arrived I gave her the keys, but not before explaining to the officers that she was attempting to use them to punish me for being late and drinking. They, of course, asked me to leave her mother's property, which I did very angrily.

As it was, the buses had stopped running early that Sunday evening, and I was without money for a cab. It was a long walk to the apartment we shared, but when I arrived there I broke into the house and proceeded to pack my things and sit them on the front porch. That done, I went back upstairs kicking a few holes in the walls along the way, and took all her clothes from the closet, along with the television, sat them in the bathtub, and ran water on them. Her mother, while outwardly tolerant of me before, was that following morning very angry and threatening towards me. When I next saw Sherrie, it was at a meeting in which I was summoned by the prosecutor for an informal settlement. I agreed to pay for all the damage I had done.

Things were never the same with Sherrie and I after that. She made the decision that our living together was not pleasing to God, and needless to say, she was not ready for marriage. She had been constantly nagging at me to change. She did not like my drinking. She did not want me smoking in the house. As she saw it, I was the whole problem. I was the one who must change. I questioned in my mind whether she had gotten involved with someone I did not know about. I tried to change, but she would have no patience. One argument led to my hitting her. I regretted it immediately. I came to learn that when a relationship reaches that point, it's pretty much over.

The last time she kicked me out she did so by delivering my belongings to my parole officer in a not so kindly manner. I moved into a rooming house for a time, and received some initial counseling for depression at a mental health center. Shortly after that, I moved in with Peter Lynn's ex-girlfriend, a girl name Bobbie. It was convenient for her because she had four children and needed to get away from the house occasionally, even to spend some time with her own sugar daddy. My rela-

tionship with her was purely platonic. I also began to spend more time with Peter Lynn. Although he stayed with his new woman on the other side of town, he tried to maintain a relationship with Bobbie also. My visit to his house had before involved drinking beer and smoking reefer, however, being out of work I had started breaking into homes again, and after one especially profitable day in which I stole close to a thousand dollars in cash, Peter Lynn introduced me to smoking cocaine. I had absolutely no idea that he and his girlfriend had been doing such a thing. I knew when I first began smoking it that I was in above my head, because even the euphoria of the drug did not stop me from repeating to him over and over again that he was a "dirty motherfucker." It had all began with him persuading me to buy him a piece of the drug, and after doing so, he insisted that because it was my money I should smoke some of it. What I did not realize at the time was that he was considering the rest of the cash I had, which brought drugs for us until it was gone.

I remember at one point getting the courage to call my mother. She admonished me for bothering *her* mother in some way by calling her. She questioned me as to whether I was using drugs upon hearing from me that I had no place to stay during a time when Sherrie kicked me out, and I admitted to her that I was. That day her husband wired me fifty dollars, and shortly after that her phone number was changed to an unlisted number. I have not spoken with her since. I have never quite understood what I may have said or done to her that is so unforgivable, in view of her being a Christian, and those things one would assume Christ has forgiven her of. My half-sister in Columbus also claims to be a Christian, and I concede that I have always appreciated her gentle spirit, but as much as I tried to be close with her, I never could. I visited

her often, sometimes with Sherrie, but she always seemed to keep things at a distance between us. Miraculously, she apparently has a better relationship with our mother than any of my mother's first two sets of children.

At another point Scott came to my aid by allowing me to sleep in his car. I did so for several days until someone called the police. Afterwards, he allowed me to come into the house and stay for a few days. He remained a true friend, feeding me when I was hungry, and always someone I could talk to about my problems with Sherrie.

Even as I became bolder in my crimes and moved out of Bobbie's home into a rundown home owned by the minister whose church I was attending, I did not realize that I was addicted. The house had previously been lived in by his mother, but had since been stripped of all its plumbing, in addition to deteriorated electrical wiring. I was allowed to live there based on a verbal agreement to rehabilitate it after having done odd jobs for the minister around his own home. I put locks on the doors, and cleaned and repaired what I could within my knowledge, and the limits in cost to the minister for supplies and materials. I was all but confined to living in an upstairs bedroom. Briefly, the potential of my repairing the house and residing there afterwards led to a renewed peace with Sherrie in which I entertained hopes of us getting back together. She would leave food outside the front door for me when I got off work until I gave her a key to leave it inside. She also brought the boys to see me at times, but rarely would agree to my staying the night with her.

As my addiction became more demanding I began to take days off work. When I lost the job I stole that much more. I shared the knowledge of my addiction with Sherrie, but she held no sympathy for me. She was in fact, very cruel. She felt

that the money I earned from stealing and wasted on drugs with Peter Lynn, like any other money I had, rightfully belonged to her. In response to my telling her that it would only be a matter of time before I was caught and sent to jail if I kept stealing, she said that perhaps that's what I needed to get myself ready for her. I saw myself as on a path of destruction simply because she would not allow our togetherness, while Peter Lynn and his woman used me unmercifully, counting on my addiction and crimes to feed their addictions while they sat at home waiting. And yet, I saw their children suffer without food throughout the month because of welfare money spent on drugs, and I saw Peter Lynn steal from his own mother, and lose his job for stealing from them.

On the night of August 14, 1986 I was riding with Peter Lynn to pick up a friend from the hospital. We had been getting high, but had ran out of money and were hopeful to come up with some idea to get more. As we neared the hospital I asked to be let out of the car, telling him only that I would meet him back at the house. Very much under the influence of the drug, I walked in search of a house to break into. I was not being cautious or attentive, breaking into the first home that appeared unoccupied. A neighbor witnessed me doing so and called the police, who caught me inside the home. I cannot explain the fact that I was very much relieved.

seven

LUCULENTLY SHARING

There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. “For whom am I toiling,” he asked, “and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?” This too is meaningless—a miserable business!

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: if one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?

ECCLESIASTES 4:8-11 NIV

IT HAS OFTEN been something that’s joked of, that a person goes to jail or prison and turns to God. The implication being that the person is not sincere, that they are trying to impress others to believe they have changed, or even trying to con or use God to get them out, where they return to what they were doing before, including forsaking God. Personally, I feel that whatever reason leads a person to seek God’s will is okay. Realistically, it is during the bad times when problems occur or situations we cannot handle that many people look to God. Rarely does one hear of a person seeking God who has just won a million dollars. Perhaps herein lies the difference in those who truly love and know Him, and those who do not. The former loves and acknowledges Him in the good times as

well as the bad, yes, even winning a million dollars.

I believe God truly loves man, and while He does not do evil or condone it for any reason, maybe He does not intervene when some bad times come along so that we might learn and change by sincerely and wholeheartedly seeking Him out. One might equate God's love and concern for us to that of gold, which is put into fire (bad times) so that the impurities can be separated and pure gold will result. Let it be understood that these are my views alone. I am not a minister or learned in theology. In fact, at times I think that theologians and well-meaning Christians tend to make God a complicated issue to others, and I really do not think that He is. Nor do I believe that anyone has a monopoly on knowing God.

It is not my intention here to argue religious beliefs or turn the reader off by preaching. And although I am not directly trying to win any souls to Christ by sharing my convictions, if any results, then let God be praised. It is enough for me to share that I too have searched for God many times as a result of being in jail, prison, alone, and other tough circumstances that I could not deal with. Frankly, there is nothing abnormal or unusual in doing so. Being confined is truly a difficult situation, in the sense that a prisoner has to deal with many personalities on a daily basis, some of which are unstable and unpredictable. This differs from the typical person on the outside who daily may encounter only a few co-workers, the grocer or dry cleaning attendant, and familiar family members. However, confinement also poses the rare opportunity for a person to get to know God, in the respect that many people on the outside are so busy trying to make a living that they never give themselves a chance to live life, or study it.

Admittedly, there have been times in my past that I would like to forget. Times when I have actually denied and cursed

God in my heart and aloud with profanity for not doing things my way. I believe God has forgiven my ignorance, and writing this book gives me the opportunity to confess with my heart and writing before the reader that Jesus Christ is Lord. I know a lot differently now than I did in the past. I can clearly see how God was working in my life, when at the time I was so convinced that He was not.

Having been incarcerated so much, I have also had the time and motivation to study the Scriptures, to seek God, and to try to find the answers for my life. It's something that never ends. I still search to this day. My confinement encouraged my involvement in a number of Bible study correspondence courses, some that I completed, some I did not. I have corresponded with quite a few Christians, hearing many ideas and viewpoints, seeing a variety of behaviors and examples, attending many spiritual services, and meeting people with genuine love and help with material needs. And, there have been others who simply talked of Christ, but did not live Him. I grew up attending Baptist churches with encouraging neighbors. There was no inclination to discuss Christ or pray together in my family. The highlight for me in those early days of church was going to the candy store after Sunday school classes while the adults attended the regular services. Having listened to services of many ministers over the years, both in and out of prison, I conclude that any religion is a personal choice that cannot be forced on anyone. If I have any disagreement about specificity in denomination or religion, it is those groups which condone covertly, blatantly, or subtly, racism.

To the readers in jails and prisons who do not want to hear this, but rather have a cut and dried answer, I am not sure that I can supply one. I will, however, emphasize that the changes must begin with you. Perhaps like I, when you really think on

it, you will see that God is true. For example, the Scriptures tell us in part to take no thought about what you will eat or wear. When I honestly look at it, I see that in all my years, while I may have believed that I was hungry at some points, I have never been hungry. When I honestly look at it, I may not have always worn the clothes I wanted, but I have always been clothed. I may not have slept in the most ideal places sometimes, but I have slept without overbearing discomfort. I can remember that I used to get very upset when I saw myself as honestly praying and trying to live the example of Christ to earn God's blessing, and yet, such did not occur. One day I came across the Scripture that essentially says that we ask for something, but we ask amiss (or deceivingly) because we are really selfishly consumed with satisfying our own lust. I had to keep asking myself whether I was really seeking the good and right thing, or burning in lust for sex? I had to ask if hidden somewhere inside me, that I did not even want to admit to myself, was I trying to get out of a bad situation so that I could smoke more dope or be with women who were not my wife? Was I using the excuse that I sought good, that I wanted to get a job and be responsible, when really I wanted to go to nightclubs and be seen riding around in a car? When I accepted that God clearly saw my motives, things I did not want to admit to myself, only then could I understand why many of my pleas to God went unanswered.

Thank God I am not a professional writer. Consequently, I can continue to be as unorthodox in my writing as I choose to be, and that's good, because right now I would like to address some things to guys in jail and those out on the streets throwing rocks at the penitentiary, thinking they will never hit it. I am aware of people all over the country trying to find the answers to change the course of our young men with various

concepts, ideas, and programs. I will not pretend to have the answers here because frankly, it's not clear whether the answers lay in being patient and understanding, or forceful and aggressive. All I can hope to do is impart some truths that may be soft to those that need, and hard to others that need.

Though perhaps you have heard it before, I dare to say that I too have been where you are now, and in some ways I still am. There are in fact many older brothers in dire circumstances that would gladly share with you, knowledge and experience to help you if they could, so that you do not go down the wrong path. Would you listen? Sure, there are all kinds of stories, true and untrue, about what a guy did and what he had. Some are told for glamour, and others for the lessons they hold. To your credit you cannot help but know already what's out there, specifically, that there really is no fun or future courting death through crime, dealing or using drugs, gang banging, or sex. Face it, you really do reap what you sow. I have stolen and done too much wrong not to have learned long ago that I would eventually get caught and have to pay. If you are involved in gang banging you might encounter a million blanks, but there's a live round that's going to hit you one day. Not your homeboy, you. If you are promiscuous with sex, AIDS will ultimately claim you. There's just no escape.

You reap what you sow. If all you ever think about is yourself, then in the end that's all you are going to wind up with, yourself. Look around you. Think on those things you do and have done. I have encountered a lot of guys with chips on their shoulders. They blame everything and everyone but themselves for their problems, and that way, they can avoid looking at themselves. They do not have to change. It's always the other person or situation, not them. We must keep it in the front of our minds that the world does not owe us anything,

nor does it center around us. We are wrong to get angry at not being able to manipulate others to do our bidding, or think and feel the way we do, remembering that it takes all kinds of people to make a world. Even for a person utterly discouraged there's hope in the fact that if nothing else can be counted on in this world, one can always count on change. Things will not stay the same.

In prison today, I meet a lot of young guys that do not want to listen. They continue to speak whatever comes to their minds without thinking on it first. They act on impulse without considering the consequences or having all the information. They refuse to allow anyone to tell them anything because they have had too many adult experiences, and met too many adults who were just as irrational as they. No matter how trivial the issue, and even in normal conversation they fight against being one-upped on in any way, viewing virtually everything as a win or lose cause. They get caught up in lying to impress others. When they get angry, they blame others. No one can make you angry. Either you choose to be angry or you do not. By claiming that someone other than ourselves made us angry is to give that person power over us. It's the same with hate. Are we really hurting that person because we hate them? I do not think so. I think they are at home having sex or supper while you are suffering by directing your energies to a wasted cause instead of putting it into something positive. You are again giving them a power over you.

Look for a moment at some of the reasons we choose to be angry. We dislike someone who seems to have more than us. We hate a person because "we" think they look better or are more intelligent than we are. We get angry because of something a person says that we do not agree with. Does it occur to us that a person can fix the mouth to say anything? I love you!

Just because I said it, does that make it true? Do we become so small and petty, refusing to admit to ourselves that we are jealous about another guy's shoes, or envious because of his woman? Stop blaming and look at what part you have in it! How can you behave differently to get the outcome you seek? Learn that there is no one person who goes through life and gets all good, or a person that gets all bad, regardless of what it may seem. Life has a funny kind of way of balancing itself out. Along the same line, there is no one person luckier than the next. Simply put, there are those who apply themselves a little, some a lot, and some not at all.

The problem lies with self. In most instances we truly are our own worst enemy. I have seen guys fight one another simply because one used the word "nigger" and the other got offended. Why? Perhaps the guy is uneducated, and grew up in an environment where the word was used frequently in everyday speech. I see young guys whose sole purpose in life is to be tough. They go through life trying to beat up the world. But look closely, he's so tough that he really does not have any friends, and those that appear to be so are those he's intimidated into an association. He's so tough that he gives the impression that he's not afraid of death, that he does not bleed or breathe like everyone else. He steps on everyone who crosses his path. He's selfish and inconsiderate of others, condemning and ridiculing anyone he cannot manipulate or that he perceives as better than himself, trying to survive by bullying and intimidating. When he finds himself in a tough spot, such as jail, he has the audacity to wonder why no one visits, why not even his own family will appear in court on his behalf to say that he's a decent fellow sometimes. Frankly, they are glad to be rid of him. He's not going to change until he decides to look at what he's really angry about and why he takes it out on others.

I had a young brother tell me recently that he did not come to jail to make friends. I could only walk away dumbfounded. Where does such stupidity come from? I do not care where I may be, but I pray to God wherever I am there is a friend also, because I might well need them. I would hope here to provoke guys to think, to awaken something in them. We can all do much better than we have been doing, for ourselves and others. Nothing and no one is perfect, except God. Even churches are falling and dying. Television ministers claiming to be of God's chosen, are virtually inaccessible, not relying upon God's protection, but the bodyguards they hire. My personal opinion is that many churches in the community tend to fall far short of God's purpose, not reaching out to help those that need, but being too concerned with playing politics. There are also many individual Christians who are caught up in playing God rather than doing those things Christ encourages us to do, and allow God Himself to take care of the outcome. Nevertheless, while we may not anticipate the world to change, we can do so ourselves.

I would like to see brothers looking beyond colors, but at hearts, beyond material things to moral things, and looking beyond taking to giving. It has been said that "by night even the atheist believes in God," and I believe that to be true. I am not sure that it is even possible for a human to reflect upon the skies in heaven and still deny God's existence. Consider the complexities of a single cell, realizing our bodies are composed of billions of cells forming a being that gives off waste and seemingly functions independently. Consider the variety of flowers, plant life, and animals in the world, many of which we are not even familiar with. Only a God power, God desire, and God imagination can account for these wonders. Scripture tells us that even the devil believes in God and trembles.

That says a lot about the person who does not. How strange to find people confessing no belief in God, but a certainty of the devil. As I see it, the best knowledge of God is in our own breath, that breath of life by which one knows innately that God is true and gives us life.

God is true, and yet allows us to doubt Him if we choose. He loves us too much to force anything on us. We know that man has an insatiable curiosity, to the extent that he would deny and doubt God for want of knowing where or what God comes from, if indeed He comes from anywhere or anything. Some find it difficult to accept or believe that He simply is. Even assuming (ridiculously) that there is or was a cause that caused God, would a person be satisfied with that knowledge, or would they also want to know what caused the cause that caused God. It brings to mind the answer God gave Moses when he inquired of Him whom he should tell the people of Israel that sent him, and God replied, "I AM THAT I AM." In other words, the buck stops with God. It does not go anywhere else. Too, there are those who deny God because He does not grant them whatever they ask, expecting of God to be like a magic lamp, essentially indicating a desire to be God, or at least have His power.

It is important to understand that in the beginning God anticipated and supplied man's every need, allowing him to live in a virtual paradise, and asking only that man obey Him. Man had a very favorable relationship with God, who desired his love and worship, which He sees as so important that rather than make man easily to be a robot walking paradise constantly expressing love for Him, God gave man a free will, because there would be no true glory for God to claim the creation of man that is forced to love Him. Understandably, in order for man's love to mean anything to God, man had

to have the capacity to hate God if he chose. In giving man a free will, God foresaw man's downfall, realized in the first man disobeying God. God, being righteous and just, must punish sin, but because He also has the ideal characteristic of love, being a loving God, He also made a plan to save man in His good mercy. Man's escape from death, the righteous and just punishment for sin, can only be experienced by believing in God's plan, which is Jesus Christ. It is interesting to note God's Son giving His life to pay for man's sin, shedding His innocent blood, and how symbolic that when man first sinned and knew his nakedness, God made coats of skin to cover man and his mate. Coats of skin that logically came from the shed blood of an innocent animal.

According to the book of Genesis and prior to man's fall from grace, as God was creating the world and the particular things thereof, He saw that they were good. It is truly significant that the very first thing in all the world that God, not just seeing that it was not good, but said at Genesis 2:18 that it is not good for man to be alone. It is important here to not get aloneness confused with loneliness, for they are different. Most humans have at one time or another experienced the feelings of loneliness, such as the lack of companionship that can only be found with a compatible mate, or those times when we are faced with a personal decision that no one else can help us with, or when we are away from home and even having loved ones, they are missed and we are homesick. There are many situations in which a person may feel lonely, however, the loneliness that is devastating, is that of being alone.

It is a bitter pill to have no choice but to realistically accept that there is no one who sincerely cares whether you are hungry or filled, sick or well, imprisoned or free, dead or alive. That no man is an island is supported by the fact that God did not

create us to be as an old shoe in a closet that may briefly be noticed during spring cleaning. Rather, we have a basic need to communicate and interact with others, that through them and with them we might also realize that our own thoughts and feelings have meaning.

I would dare to say as a human that if God had any need, it was not to be alone, which would also be a testimony to Christ by His side from the foundation of the earth. It is frequently aloneness and the overwhelming feeling of loneliness associated with that, which leads to many psychosomatic illnesses, and suicide. Perhaps too, aloneness may be why prison confinement is society's major form of punishment. Truthfully, a person can be detained in a luxury hotel suite, and even with room service, television, etc., with guards posted at the door, time would shortly prove that person in a prison as well. When a person is imprisoned it essentially takes them away from the family, friends, and environment with which they feel most accepted and comfortable. In essence, making them alone. Consistent with the idea of prisons imposing aloneness as punishment is the fact that while in prison, if a person continues to exhibit inappropriate behavior, they are put in the "hole," which makes their aloneness more apparent to them by separating them from the general prison population. Furthermore, prison is not an ideal environment for sharing one's innermost, personal, or intimate thoughts and feelings, as they are apt to be used against you by both staff and inmates.

Loneliness pervades today's prisons. Many prisoners defend this feeling with anger, not being taught or willing to share these hurts by any other emotion. Many young men have had it ingrained from childhood that it is taboo in this society for a "real man" to express emotions outside of anger and aggression. This anger is compounded when in many instances, es-

pecially so with black males, a person's outside emotional and family support has eroded upon entering prison.

An inmate first entering into Ohio's prison system (which consists of seventeen prisons with additional facilities under construction or planning), is sent to a reception center or receiving prison for the purpose of classification. It is unreasonable for an entering inmate to reason that the judge simply sentenced him to serve time, because every inmate must comply by rules, including work. In past years, receiving prisoners were sent to the prison in Chillicothe, Mansfield Reformatory, and the old Ohio Penitentiary. The latter two have closed from deteriorated use. Today, Ohio has prisons in Lorain and Pickaway counties designated as reception centers. Normally, a prisoner from Akron or Cleveland would go to the Lorain facility, while those from Columbus, Cincinnati, and Toledo are sent to the reception center in Pickaway. A receiving prison typically maintains several hundred cadre inmates assigned to that institution to assist in the processing of new inmates into the system. Every prison in the country functions essentially by inmates who are supervised by corrections officers. Prisoners prepare the food, maintain cleanliness, laundry, recreation supplies, etc. It is not uncommon for a prisoner to work in the mailroom, and in the case of cadre inmates at a receiving prison, do actual fingerprinting and photography.

Classification of prisoners involve a medical evaluation (consisting of a chest x-ray, tetanus shots, known medical history, and now upon request, an AIDS test). Additional testing includes psychological (primarily the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory), and emotional testing. The results of these evaluations, along with the length of sentence, prior convictions, and the type of crime committed are used to determine what security status (maximum, close, medium, or

minimum) and institution the prisoner will be assigned to. In the case of an inmate with a life sentence, that factor alone would automatically out weigh all others, and the prisoner would be sent to a maximum security prison, of which Ohio has two, the new Mansfield prison and Lucasville.

An individual Ohio prison may have its own receiving unit where prisoners arriving from the reception centers are initially housed away from the general prison population to learn the rules of that particular institution. Collectively, there is very little uniformity among Ohio prisons. For example, here at Madison smoking is not allowed in the visiting room, while it is at other Ohio prisons. Madison requires inmates to be fully dressed in prison issue clothes whenever out on the yard, even after working hours, and have a late-night curfew for watching television (Friday, Saturday, and the eve before a holiday) of 12:30 p.m. while other prisons are different.

Regardless as to whether the prison has a receiving unit or not, each new inmate is again classified to an institutional work, or if warranted, educational assignment (limited to Adult Basic Education, GED, and college programs usually sponsored in the prison by the local college in that area). Unfortunately, and especially so for a prisoner serving a short sentence and needs some formal education beyond Adult Basic Education, most new prisoners are assigned to work in the prison kitchen for a minimum of ninety days, with and because of the kitchen being one of the least coveted jobs in prison. Inmates with low reading levels are pretty much required to take Adult Basic Education classes.

The classification process is supposedly done by a unit management team. The concept of unit management in prisons was first implemented in federal prisons, ideally to allow inmates easier access to staff in resolving problems. The unit manage-

ment team consist primarily of a unit manager, case manager, and a counselor. Unfortunately, the Ohio prison system has opted to heavily incorporate correctional officer personnel into the unit management team, functioning under the title of correctional counselor, yet realistically do little more than intimidate and render other vital unit staff (unit and case managers) inaccessible. Typically, the correctional counselor is promoted to the position from within the ranks of correctional officers, receiving little more than a crash course in professional counseling. This type of mismanagement is consistent with Ohio prisoners no longer being able to directly file a grievance. The grievance procedure has all but been eliminated by the implementation of an "informal complaint" procedure that must be documented and filed first, in many cases before a grievance form will be given. This gives the person or persons of whom the grievance is filed against, more time to cover their own behind, even placing the grievant in the hole, and all without the administration headquarters being aware. This does little more than discourage inmates from filing grievances.

Prison has often been equated to a society within a society, where cigarettes are used as currency. True to that concept, and in comparison to the free society, many prisoners are materialistic on a smaller scale. A Rolls Royce would be equivalent to the make of television, or the make and model of gym shoes, watches, jogging suits, or any item prisoners are commonly known to possess. A prisoner's worth is often judged by other inmates to be how often and who visits, the regularity with which one receives mail and money orders, whether they go to the commissary each week, the jewelry they wear, and how well one is known by reputation from the outside by other prisoners. Surprisingly, a homosexual often gets more respect and consideration in prison than one who

is not. While on the other hand, far too many staff judge most inmates as worthless, reducing judgment to their freedom versus the inmate's confinement.

Drugs, gambling, and sex also function in a prison society. While sex is fairly limited in the respect of partners to homosexuality, there is presumably individual masturbation. Homosexuality usually involves an inmate who is hardened and doing a lengthy sentence (and usually the aggressor), associating himself with a known homosexual ("kid," "fag," or "boy"). Nor is it unheard-of for a timid prisoner seeking the guidance and protection of a more experienced prisoner from extortion to ultimately be coerced and manipulated by the protector into a sex act. Homosexual rapes in prison are not as frequent as stories about such incidents. There are states that permit conjugal visiting, however, Ohio is not one of them. Hypothetically, statistics may indicate that within a certain time period a married prisoner's spouse seeks a divorce, whereas conjugal visits may well sustain a marriage until the prisoner's release. Theoretically, one might assume that Ohio prefers to keep the divorce rate high. Personally, I find more and more in today's prisons that television and its normal programming sexually frustrate many prisoners. In particular, news shows such as *Inside Edition*, *Hard Copy*, and *A Current Affair*, which feature sexually-oriented stories several times per week.

In some cases, because of unfulfilled time, a prisoner may become addicted to gambling, sitting at a table for hours playing cards, or shooting pool. Even betting on professional sports. Pool tables and televisions are traditional recreation items provided for prisoners. Often an inmate's family and friends are totally unaware of a gambling or drug addiction while in prison, even with the telltale sign of a prisoner requesting that money be promptly sent to another prisoner's

home address, usually to pay a drug or gambling debt. Drugs are entered into the institution by profit seeking staff, or more commonly, a prisoner's visitor who smuggle in drugs (often in balloons that an inmate swallows) and money in packages. Drugs can and are sold on the condition that payment be sent to a certain designation, (termed a "send out"). The seller can then have the money returned to them in the approved form (a money order) by an approved visitor. Drugs can also be sold directly for commissary items, in which the dealer gives the buyer a "store list" of what items they want.

A hardened prisoner is a person having a long sentence to serve, and who becomes callous and unfeeling towards others after serving any number of years. He experiences a prison staff not inclined towards compassion or rehabilitation, but equally unfeeling. Unfortunately, many prisoners isolated from society do not realistically consider that there are worse things in life than being in prison, such as being afflicted with AIDS. The fact remains that in this country the average prisoner serves about four and a half years before release, and the majority of prisoners will someday be released. Nevertheless, it must be stressed again that prisons do produce anger and hate in prisoners, often held inside themselves until it explodes. Initially, a harrassed prisoner may accept the disrespect, not wanting to go to the hole or harm his chances of parole, which is in many cases used as a psychological whip. However, repeated unfair and unjust treatment will reach a point where even a minor incident can provoke the prisoner to behave inappropriately.

I am also aware of prisoners attempting to classify themselves as either "convict" or "inmate." Personally, I think it is ridiculous. In all actuality it is an unnecessary confusion that inhibits prisoners from addressing and concentrating on significant prison issues. Some claim that an inmate is a prisoner

who will “snitch” to the staff. A convict is alleged to be someone at home with the prison way of life, accepting and realizing that even when he does get out he will eventually be returned, because that is the life he chooses to live, whereas, an inmate is one who simply wants to do the time and get out, doing whatever is necessary along the way. Convicts are supposedly committed to the prison code, where inmates are not.

Whether hardened criminal, convict, or inmate, there are tales of prisoners loaning to other prisoners some item with the intention of putting them in a situation where they may not be able to repay at the specified time. The more experienced prisoner seeking sex desires such, that he might coerce the repayment with a sex act. These are prisoners who over the years have become manipulators to gain sex, commissary items, or items prisoners are allowed to receive in sundry and food packages from the outside. Some prisoners without any emotional, material, or financial support from the outside feel justified in using whatever methods they can to meet the needs not supplied by the prison, or wants for their own comfort and gratification. Prisoners of all standing, new or old are extorted in the guise of friendship, and protection by prisoners they and others consider more hardened. It’s a classic case of the strong preying upon the weak. That these things continue to happen in today’s prisons can be attributed to the state’s and the particular institution’s failure to properly classify and screen its prisoners, though it must be accepted that all behaviors in a person cannot be predicted.

Contrary to popular belief, all of a prisoner’s needs are not met by the institution. While in an Ohio reception center a prisoner is not allowed to receive packages from the outside, however, a prisoner at his parent institution is allowed to receive four sundry packages per year, per quarter (January

through March being the first quarter). Such an inmate may also receive two food packages per year, one during a designated period during the Christmas holiday, and the other at any time of the prisoner's choosing. As with money orders, packages can only be received from an inmate's approved visitor. An approved visitor is normally an inmate's immediate family. Ohio prisoners are also permitted two friends on their visiting list. A potentially approved friend is first mailed a visiting form questionnaire to complete and return to the institution visiting office. If that friend is on probation, parole, or has a criminal history, they will likely not be approved.

My reservations with regards to writing about the intimates of prison life is not to be taken as an excuse for family and friends not to help those that need. Oftentimes, prisoners add their own family to their hate for not being justly supportive. My purpose here is to merely provoke interest and inform. Many people do not know that cameras and recording devices are not permitted in prisons, or that drug use is a reality there. As for prisoners themselves, I am ashamed at the lack of motivation to educate oneself, and to seek to accomplish beneficial things during incarceration. When I consider Christ encouraging Christians to visit those in prison, and those claiming to be of Christ, I am at a loss to understand the overall lack of concern.

eight

GODLY MOTIVATED

MY BEING IN jail again understandably came as no surprise to anyone that knew me. I had only been out of prison a mere seven months, and though not a long time, it was the longest period of freedom for me since I had began serving time in South Carolina. I attributed that successful period to my relationship with Sherrie. I further used it to support my personal opinion that having a woman of my own was the answer to my life away from incarceration. I reasoned in my heart that if she had never pushed me away, I would have still been free.

The first few days in jail were sobering and full of sleep. As a credit to the powerful psychological addiction of cocaine, being where I saw it as impossible to get any, I had no strong cravings or withdrawals. Sober, I felt ashamed, too ashamed initially to

contact anyone. When I did, my half-sister seemed only mildly sympathetic, though Scott was spiritually encouraging. Peter Lynn, having suspected my getting caught, expressed as much regret as an addict not directly affected, promising to bring me some underwear, but never getting around to doing so. It was later rumored to me that Karl had broken into the house I was repairing, and took all of my possessions.

Sherrie too emphasized looking to God, as she claimed to be so committed to doing. She permitted me to call her, and while I believed she had soon after my arrest gotten involved with someone, if for no other reason than the sex she frequently denied me, she kept it hidden, insisting she had no desire or need for a man. Shortly after my arrest she was successful in receiving a retroactive social security payment in the name of her youngest son's father. With it, she purchased a new car, crediting it all to God's blessing. I saw it as a whore having sex with an old man, and benefited from it by receiving monthly payments until her son reached eighteen, regardless as to any other income she might realize. She visited me at the jail infrequently, leaving small sums of money, allowing me to see her new car from a window, and subtly provoking me to hold on to the hope of a better relationship and marriage to her when I got out.

I loved her, resented her, and viewed God as horribly unjust. A view reinforced by Peter Lynn sharing with me over the phone of how an attractive oriental girl was then spending considerable time at his house getting high. Before my arrest, no desirable females that I would even consider manipulating drugs for sex were present. Sherrie's and my mother's rejection, along with her lying to others that I had destroyed a typewriter, not only reinforced my belief that God was unfair, but that women were truly no good. I wanted the world to

know that they had rejected me and lied to me. I wanted to even visit her church and stand before the congregation to expose her for what I saw her as. I wanted everyone to know how Celestine unnaturally held no curiosity for Paul or I, and would have nothing to do with either of us, I believed for fear of falling out of our mother's good graces. I was convinced that our mother controlled even her married life.

The possibility of my being released from jail was inconceivable, due to the parole detainer lodged against me. I had been charged with a second degree felony of aggravated burglary, and although I had been caught inside the house not having actually stolen anything, I was also charged with a felony specification for theft because of my having been convicted of a misdemeanor theft in the past. The public defender appointed to my case as counsel, was unconcerned about the details involved in the case. He was insistent that because of my criminal history, and being caught inside the house, that I really had no other recourse but to plead guilty to the aggravated burglary, and the state would drop the theft specification. I made it clear to him that I would not plead guilty, because I felt certain that I would receive additional time from the parole board, and I had not stolen anything.

The public defender represented to me the typical inefficient counsel appointed to indigent prisoners. He would not even consider arguing for a reduced and more appropriate charge of breaking and entering, or even the misdemeanor charge of criminal trespassing, though I knew also the likelihood of my being given more time to serve by the parole authorities. His argument to me was that I had no defense. He kept looking to me to give him a defense. I felt angry and insulted because he was unwilling to do his job. As I saw it, even the worst criminal case had a defense. Frustrated that he could not persuade

me to plead guilty, he told the judge in court after having apparently told him in his chambers, that I wanted another attorney because he and I could not communicate. I boldly stood up and explained to the judge that I did not want a new attorney, because to do so would be taken as my agreeing to a continuance in the case to find and appoint one, which I did not want. Rather, I wanted to exercise my right to a jury trial and a speedy trial. I explained that it was not a matter of the attorney and I not communicating, but of his insisting that I plead guilty, which I was not willing to do. I again submitted verbally to the court that where my attorney claimed I had no defense, I felt that even in the worst case there is a defense.

Judge Cain, new to the bench, was obviously angry at what he saw as my not cooperating. He said menacingly that he would appoint another attorney to my case and that I would go to trial whether I got along with them or not. Several days later I was transferred to the then receiving center in Chilli-cothe, as O.P. had been closed because of age and deteriorated use. I arrived hating life, living, and myself. I questioned my having no direction or purpose in life. I was surprised when I received a letter from Sherrie, sharing with me what I had thought only I realized, that if she had never pushed me away I would have still been there doing all I could to make her and the boys happy. I resented her selfishness, her having no interest in encouraging my education or success. It did not take long before her writing slacked off considerably, though when once she wrote saying that she saw other guys who reminded her of me, I accepted it as her roundabout way of telling me that she was either involved with someone else or leaning towards it. What writing we did have together was with the glue of our communicating about God, and though she did not send me any money, she did send a package of some basic

things that I needed.

As far as I was concerned, I had no family. Whenever I spoke with others about personal things I easily and with satisfaction denied having family. As a means to supply myself with cigarettes and toilet articles I formed a "chinese laundry," washing and pressing other prisoners clothes in exchange for cigarettes, which I would smoke or trade for things I needed. I also began concentrating on writing and finding new friends. While I loved Sherrie, and held on to a small hope of a future with her, I believed in my heart that the desire for sex would lead her to a new relationship that even God could not prevent. I felt that she was simply too young to know what she really wanted in life. I wondered if she realized that I was not only hurting from the loss of her, but of the boys also.

I went before the parole board for a revocation hearing in October 1986, where my parole was formally revoked. Although I had yet to be found guilty of the charges against me in court, the Ohio Adult Parole Authority by implication having more authority than the courts, gave me one year to serve, essentially, just for being charged. I accepted it convinced that there was nothing I could do about it. I held to the hope that perhaps the court would go easier on me in light of the time they gave me.

I was assigned to a job working in the prison kitchen, and again turned to reading the Bible and being more Christ conscious. The days passed as I anticipated being contacted by a new attorney, but when my court date arrived and I was transferred back to Columbus, I had still not been contacted. As I sat with this knowledge in a holding cell outside the courtroom, I was approached by a female supervisor from the public defender's office. She asked me to sign a paper stating that I was indigent and requesting the state to appoint coun-

sel to me. I refused to sign it. I saw it as a ploy by the state to get me to agree to another continuance, having discovered the failure to appoint me a lawyer, which I was again firmly against. Having persuaded Sherrie to visit the owner of the home I broke into, I had learned that he was a minister. He had apparently been on vacation for two weeks prior to the break-in, and did not return until two weeks after it. Sherrie claimed to have spoken with him and the results left me hopeful. He was affiliated with a church in another Ohio city, and was therefore away from his home even when not vacationing. He was an elderly black man who seemed forgiving, and not too enthusiastic about going through the court proceedings, especially with nothing being taken, and with my promise to repay him for any damages.

By delaying the trial with continuances, the state had time to locate the owner, and witnesses, and issue them summons. They could be expected to bring pressure to bear upon the owner to appear in court. Only he could say that I had no permission to be in the home, regardless as to how I entered it. If he did not appear the state would have to consider dropping the charges against me. When I refused to sign the supervisor's paper, she got very angry with me. I became equally angry, and in not so nice language told her to get away from me. As I angrily explained to her, she should go back and get the initial request for counsel that I signed when an attorney was first appointed in the case, and if that was not sufficient, she should talk with the judge who had informed me several months before and against my wishes that he would appoint a new attorney. Needless to say, another continuance was granted in the case, and I was returned to Chillicothe to await the new trial date.

On a day in December I was in the dorm, laying on my

bunk and consumed with boredom. Though I continued to read the Bible, I was very much frustrated. Day to day nothing changed and I received no blessings. I could not understand the claim of other Christians to find a “peace that surpasses all understanding.” I would read plainly in the Scriptures where Christ said that anything asked for in His name He would give. I reasoned that if all the Scriptures were true, and that not adding anything to them, or taking anything away from that particular verse or any other, then that verse could not be true, because I did not receive anything I asked for, even asking in Christ’s name.

An unexpected blessing came for me as I was coming from the bathroom, passing a familiar trash can, and pulling several old *Toledo Blade* newspapers from it. Back at my bunk, I read and came across the personal ad of a then fifty-seven year-old white man, calling himself Isaac, and seeking to meet a Rebecca, I decided to write him, thinking and hoping that if he was really a Christian he would be my friend no matter what a bad person I was convinced that I was. It was a decision that would change my life.

His name was John Joseph Kranz, and he lived in Toledo at the home of his elderly parents. His father was suffering from lung cancer, and his mother had a number of infirmities. He was devoted to caring for them. He was childless, never married, a former Catholic priest who had lived in a monastery for thirteen years, though had since converted to Christianity. In years to come I would ask and depend on him for many things, but my first request of him was that he simply not leave me alone. This I begged and pleaded of him. I began to write him daily, pouring out my anguish and frustrations about a lifetime of incarceration, the lack of true loving family, God, Sherrie, and my consuming desire for a mate. I am con-

vinced that our friendship worked simply because he allowed me to communicate with him freely, even when I cursed God and appeared ungrateful. It was only because I felt that I had nothing to lose that I could be so open and honest with him. Before long I knew him only as Dad, as he came to accept me as his son.

Despite Dad's rare sincerity, I remained doubtful about him for some time. I had begun to discover his own insecurities, and questioned to myself what he might possibly see in me or want from me. Just days before receiving his first letter I had prayed to God in a manner that I have never felt as close to God before or since. I wondered if Dad was an answer to prayer. He is unquestionably the closest person to the Lord that I have ever met, convinced from the start that he was God-appointed in my life. He has expressed to me many times that he merely wants to live to see me do well, and to this day I do not see the goodness in myself that he has often claimed to make me special. My meeting Dad did not deter my selfish desire for the things I needed, wanted, and was permitted to have in prison. When he first visited me, he brought me a substantial amount of money for my prison account, and a sundry package of everything I had asked of him.

Though I was happy for his support, I felt very guilty and displeased with myself. I had shared a lot of secrets about myself that I had never shared with anyone else, and because he accepted even the bad about me, I genuinely liked him. I did not want to treat him as I had treated good Christians who had helped me in the past. I did not want to feel guilty for thinking I was using him, nor did I want him to think that. Still, no matter how I behaved with him, at times taking him for granted, and trying to push him away, he never stopped communicating with me. Of all that he was to give me in

those early days of our relationship, by far the most important was a sense of self-worth. He encouraged me to pursue college course, which I did in a program that Ohio University had set up in the prison. He got involved in every aspect of my life, encouraging and guiding me spiritually while I denied God and fought against reason. I was pleased to tell Sherrie of my good fortune.

Dad also helped me with my criminal case. Like Sherrie had, he too visited the victim of my crime, even paying him for the window I had broken, and being assured by the victim his willingness to forgive me. Dad initially gave me five hundred dollars to hire an attorney who had represented me as a public defender on a misdemeanor case in the past. However, before this attorney had made any court appearances with me or on my behalf, and having explained to Dad the legal representation I had been getting, Dad wrote to the Christian Legal Society to request a referral to a Christian criminal attorney. We both believed that such an attorney would sincerely defend my case rather than concentrate on pressuring me to plead guilty. The referral that resulted was to a civil attorney, however, through contacting him I was referred to Mr. Jackson.

From the onset he seemed very sincere. He requested a one thousand dollar retainer, which Dad promptly mailed to him, and he came to visit me at Chillicothe to discuss the case. I remained adamant about not pleading guilty to an aggravated burglary, and Mr. Jackson assured me that if my desire was to go to a jury trial, that's what we would do. I was constantly being moved from prison to jail during this period, in the process befriending a black female and a black male sheriff's deputy. They escorted me each trip. Both were very nice and communicative when they really did not have to be, and especially her, in encouraging me to stay with God.

On July 21, 1987, my scheduled trial date, I went to court prepared for trial, and optimistic about a good outcome. Mr. Jackson however, had worked out a deal in which the aggravated burglary charge would be reduced to burglary, the theft case would be dropped, and I would be sentenced to a term concurrently with the time I was already doing, in exchange for my guilty plea. He strongly advised me to accept the plea agreement, as it was likely the best deal I would be offered. I was assured that the victim and witnesses were present, and that the state was prepared to go to trial. I had been wrestling with the case for close to a year, and I wanted it over with. I knew that while I would likely receive an indeterminate sentence, the maximum would be limited to fifteen years, and it would run concurrent with the sentence I was already doing. As well, Mr. Jackson had also spoke with Dad, persuading him that it was the best course for me.

I wept openly in the crowded courtroom as I pled guilty. I was humiliated, though in an attempt to save face I expressed that I did not care how much time the court gave me. Dad addressed the court about how we met, my involvement and troubles with Sherrie, and my then being enrolled in college. Another young Christian man with whom I had briefly corresponded with acted as a character witness for me. Lastly, Mr. Jackson spoke, requesting several times that I be granted a concurrent sentence, which I also hoped would be a signal to the parole board not to keep me for a long time. Judge Cain complied and sentenced me to a five to fifteen year term to run concurrent. I was glad that it was over and that I at least knew where I stood.

Back at Chillicothe I continued with my college courses. When I was not studying, however, I wasted a lot of Dad's money buying and smoking reefer. I also wrote to the first

attorney we had hired to request a refund, but he refused to do so. My complaints to the disciplinary counsel of the Supreme Court of Ohio failed to get it back. Subsequently, I befriended a jailhouse lawyer who taught me to prepare a civil action against the attorney. I had only been back at the prison a few weeks when I received a notice from the prison Records Office indicating that I was serving an eight to thirty year sentence.

Up until that time I had assumed that I was serving only a five to fifteen year sentence. As I reasoned it, the three to fifteen year sentence that I had been doing was eaten up by the concurrent five to fifteen term the judge had recently given me. I also thought that any time that I had served on the old sentence also applied to the new sentence. Days later I learned that Ohio law specifically states that if a person is on probation, parole, or escape status and receives a new sentence, any new sentence must be served consecutively. Ohio law mandates this, and the Ohio Department of Corrections in computing my sentence had aggregated my new sentence with the old one in compliance with the law. I was very angry about it. I had been tricked.

I sought the counsel of several jailhouse lawyers that I knew. They informed me that the sentence was in fact, no good, and that I must be given a new trial. They aided me in filing motions with the court, however, Judge Cain, without calling me back to appear in court, and two months after having been sentenced, changed my sentence from a five to fifteen concurrent to a four to fifteen consecutive. When I sought Mr. Jackson's intervention to straighten the matter out, he merely emphasized my getting a break by the judge reducing the minimum term by one year, which would allow me to go before the parole board sooner. I viewed it differently, a consecutive sentence as opposed to a concurrent one. The plain fact

was that the judge had erred. He gave me a sentence that the law said that I could not have, and consequently, when he did so, it subsequently voided both my sentence and my guilty plea. It is not legally possible to make a good sentence out of a bad one. What the judge was supposed to do was to call me back to court to arrange a new trial, or if possible a new plea agreement.

By the time I went before the parole board in October 1987, after having served the year for parole violation, I had begun to learn about the law and legal proceedings. I could file my own motions with the court, and I did so by initiating a civil suit against Mr. Jackson for malpractice, for negligence and misrepresentation of my case by coercing and encouraging me to plead guilty to a sentence that was illegal. I also discovered from my legal studies that my crime and the circumstances surrounding it, did not meet the elements in Ohio law to constitute an aggravated burglary. What distinguishes an aggravated burglary from plain burglary is among other things, the attempt or actual physical harm to another during the crime, the possession of a dangerous ordinance or weapon, and lastly that during the time of the offense someone was present or likely to be present. Mr. Jackson had stated in open court that witnesses had told him that they did not think anyone was at home at the victim's home. Surely if people who had not committed the crime did not think anyone was home, I was not expected to think any better. Paper and mail were stacked up on the front porch. Where my case did not meet the elements of an aggravated burglary, Mr. Jackson did not argue in any way. Further, I could not have been expected to know that I was ineligible to receive a concurrent sentence, when obviously the judge, prosecutor, and defense attorney did not even know. Then serving an eight to thirty year term,

the parole board sentenced me to continue serving time until my regularly scheduled parole board date on the new sentence.

Getting no relief from the judge who sentenced me, I was successful at being appointed a public defender for appeal purposes. My case was thereafter appealed to the Tenth District Court of Appeals, in part on the grounds that my guilty plea was not entered knowingly, voluntarily, or intelligently. Dad had by that time began placing personal ads for me in the *Toledo Blade*, with the hope that I might find a girlfriend. Sherrie was making plans to enter the Army, and her letters and visits to me had become rare. I had come to accept that she certainly did not feel as I did about her. Dad was like a silent party watching our relationship from afar, though being aware of my love for her, he only occasionally hinted at his opinion that she was not right for me. Of course, Dad had pretty much spoiled me by then, and Sherrie knew as I did that I really did not need any material or financial help from her, even if she would have considered it.

I had virtually every luxury that a guy could have in prison, and the best of it. In fact, I saw myself as doing considerably better in prison as a college student with the love of a devoted Dad, than many of my acquaintances on the outside. That further bewildered me as to why I was having such a difficult time simply finding a desirable woman to communicate with. I made no secret to Sherrie that I was looking for someone new, and had even asked her to introduce me to someone. In my heart I had decided that the only way to repay her the hurt she had led me to suffer was to forever deny her me, irregardless as to my continued love and desire for her.

Replies to my ads were less than expected considering my sincerity and the frequency with which the ads were placed. Typically, when I did get a reply, it was usually from a girl who

was overweight. I was bold enough to be frank with them that I was not interested. I wanted a woman of my own, a girl no bigger or uglier than I, and I was very upfront and diligent in seeking that. I told myself that I would not settle for less than what I wanted in a woman. At the same time, neither did I think too highly of them. I was of course heavily influenced by Sherrie's and my mother's rejection, as well as other experiences that I had with women. I was really swayed with the discovery in the Bible of Solomon saying essentially at Ecclesiastes 7:28 that there is no such thing as a good woman. I saw myself as a living testimony to that. I saw women as whores, believing that the slim petite women I desired and would have a relationship with, were also desirable to other men on the outside, and therefore would be pursued and would not even consider a relationship with a prisoner. Whereas, few men were truly interested in obese women. The longer I remained in prison the more important it became for me to find a mate because I had learned from family and friends who had used me, that I did not want someone who was okay with me during the good times, but not during the bad. I wanted someone that would love and accept me in the bad times.

Towards the end of 1987 Dad's father's health was failing fast. Dad did not like being away from home so long with his lengthy visits to me, so we applied for a hardship transfer to another prison. It was our hope that I could be sent to Allen Correctional Institution, one of the then newer facilities in Ohio. The request for transfer was approved, however, I was sent to the Lima Correctional Institution, directly across the street from Allen, in Lima Ohio, and formerly the state mental hospital. Shortly after my arrival, Dad's father passed away.

While at Lima I continued fighting the lawsuit against Mr. Jackson, as well as awaiting the decision on my appeal. I also

enrolled in the college program as a computer science major with the University of Findlay. I did well in my courses, maintaining a high grade point average, and the encouragement and praise of my instructors. I was not only encouraged by Dad, but my own hope of a well paying job, and ultimately the ability to buy the mate that I could not seem to win otherwise. I already had some basic computer knowledge, and was enthusiastic to learn more. I learned Pascal programming on an IBM personal computer, and went on to learn Basic and COBOL on the school's VAX System. Out of my own initiative and inspired by Scott's accomplishments as a C programmer, I began to learn the basic format of that language. I remained confident that because of my knowledge and skills, my future would be bright.

In July 1988, almost a year to date from the time I filed my appeal, I received a reversal. The appeals court sustained my case in part, and reversed it in part. Significantly, they agreed that my plea had not been entered knowingly, voluntarily, or intelligently. Nevertheless, I remained in prison, unscheduled for a parole hearing, and given no indication of release. Still, I was pleased and confident that the ruling would strengthen my lawsuit against Mr. Jackson. In answer to interrogatories, and in answer to the question whether he had known that I could not receive a concurrent sentence, he answered that he was not "specifically cognizant" at the time. I reasoned that being a poor black male who indirectly retained him for one thousand dollars, he should have been "explicitly" cognizant. In my suit I was requesting half of a million dollars in damages. I felt that all my life when I was caught doing wrong, I was made to pay, primarily by being confined. I thought that he should pay for his wrong as well.

But my victory was short lived. The State of Ohio decid-

ed to appeal the district court's ruling to the Ohio Supreme Court. The first injustice was the higher court deciding to even hear the case because the law regarding the issues were already clear. The second injustice occurred when the public defender, having done his job, terminated himself from the case, leaving me to argue alone to the higher court, who thereafter took the valid issues of the case totally out of context, reinstating the judgment of the trial court without specifying whether such judgment was the original concurrent sentence imposed, or the sentence imposed several months later, and not elaborating on the case in the syllabus.

From that point on I understood how corrupt the legal system is, from the body to the head. I could not even find an attorney with even perfunctory interest to fight my lawsuit or criminal case. Understandably, had the courts acted properly, either the state or Mr. Jackson, or both would have been liable for my incarceration, after having served the year for parole violation, on a sentence improperly imposed and legally void. At a complete loss for what to do legally, but not deterred from fighting, I was again encouraged by jailhouse lawyers to file a writ of habeas corpus in federal court on the grounds that I was being held illegally.

My efforts in my case, and my attention to college courses took away from the energy in seeking a mate. Sherrie had in fact entered the Army, completed her basic training in Alabama, and was preparing for additional training in Texas. She wrote only sporadically, though only to talk of God in her life. When she wrote to tell me that she felt God calling her to relocate to Texas, I had little doubt that in the ninety day period she was in Texas, she had gotten involved with someone. I could not conceive of God being the motivation for her to move so far away from her mother, taking her sons where she

really did not know any one. For a man, she would. When I inquired about it from her, she was evasive, never admitting what I eventually learned from corresponding with her sister was true. Her sister told me that I should be pleased for Sherrie and the fact that some guy wanted to marry her. I never had believed her expressing the desire to get involved in missionary work, nor was I deceived with her consolation that she would always love me with the love of a sister.

I was angry for a long time about Sherrie. I thought at times that if I had AIDS I could find comfort in the knowledge that she was dying too. I wanted to hurt back. I thought it unfair that she had been with more men than the average grown woman had been through in her entire lifetime, when I could not find anyone for me. I hated with envy, thoughts that she might be happy, and resented the memory of her saying there would never be an Abigail without her. I never heard from her again after that, and I resolved myself not to contact her. Besides hearing in years to come that she was still in Texas and had several more children, I have not heard anything from her.

Intermittently, I wrote to a handful of women while at Lima, as well as a few Christians. Where the women were overweight, or attractive but unwilling to commit to me, I terminated the communication. At one point when Dad had refused to keep giving me money to waste, I corresponded with several gay men in an attempt to use them. I wrote to several women in prison, but found them to be quick making promises, saying all the nice things a guy likes to hear, until they were released and were not heard from again. When a black prisoner in my dorm grew tired of my complaints and condemnation of women, he offered to let me write to a few Jamaican girls whom he had received letters from in response to an ad he had placed in a Jamaican newspaper. Initially, I

turned down the offer. As I saw it, they could not be much different from women I had written in prison, likely unable to send me anything, and unable to visit.

When I finally took him up on the offer, he gave me roughly twenty-five to thirty letters. All of the letters were written approximately one year before. They were from women who promised sex and marriage, some with too many children, some who included photos, and most of whose handwriting was childish or illegible. The one girl I chose to write was Yvonne, because of all the letters, her handwriting was the most legible, and her birthdate was a mere two days before mine and of the same year. I mailed my first letter to her with reservations, and doubts that she would receive my letter or reply.

Several months passed, and having forgotten that I had written her, I was taken aback when I received Yvonne's letter. Her legible writing was likely due to her being a school teacher, and soon we began corresponding regularly. I replied with my photo and increased frankness with each letter. To solve the problem of postage, I sent the letters I wrote her to Dad to mail for me, trusting that he would do so faithfully. As time passed our writing reached a point where I was hearing from her more often than guys with girlfriends in Ohio. She sent photos, and even complied with reluctant trust when I requested more revealing pictures. She was a deeply religious woman, not at all outgoing. She was very pretty, and with an incredibly sexy body. She seemed genuinely interested in pleasing me, complementing my masculinity with her gentle femininity and submissiveness. Dad, from the start believed her to be an answer to prayers, and especially so after learning of her religious convictions and upbringing. Yvonne and I talked of marriage and children, and she quickly made Abigail a mutual dream. I wanted her sexually, but also to get to know

her more as a person from being in her presence, but I knew that even when I got out of prison I would be restricted from traveling to Jamaica because of my parole. She had also shared with me the difficulty in getting a visa to this country, and having previously been turned down for one.

Scheduled to go before the parole board in March 1990, I was already enrolled in my final semester to earn my two year degree, with honors. Yvonne had moved out of her aunt's home where she had been raised, into an apartment of her own. She was also hopeful to be granted a visa to accompany the children at her school on a trip to Disney World. Shortly before my parole hearing we both considered it an answer to prayer that a visa was issued for her, and she began saving her money for the July 1990 trip. Though happy for her, I was not at all confident that I would be granted a parole. Rather, I was hopeful that the federal courts would exact a release for me in my case. Although I had served a year for parole violation, as well as the minimum on the new sentence, I nonetheless anticipated a "flop" from the parole board.

Elatedly, I was granted a parole. It came as a surprise to everyone. I reasoned that the parole authority had to be aware of the legal actions in my case, and perhaps conspiratorially granted the parole with advanced knowledge of the federal courts denying my writ just days later. I was informed that I could appeal within fifteen days the federal magistrate's ruling, but I allowed the days to lapse and did not do so. My freedom was what I desired most, and realistically, few prisoners are awarded monetary compensation. Besides, I was not completely innocent. At that point I had been confined forty-five months. I was certain that even lacking a semester to obtain my associate's degree, I could at least secure a better job than I had ever had in my life.

There was nothing left for me in either Cleveland or Columbus, except bad memories. I decided to be paroled to a halfway house in Toledo, I wanted to give something back to Dad. Mostly, I wanted to simply always be there for him, but also to allow him to see me do well after all the love, money, and time he had invested in me. I began communicating with Yvonne by letter tapes, so that we could hear one another's voice after a long year of letter writing. Dad helped me get started by purchasing clothes for me, and taking me job hunting. He was as enthusiastic and optimistic as I. It proved to be extremely difficult. Ideally, I would have liked to land a job as an entry level programmer, but I felt that not actually having my degree, my race, and my lengthy criminal record would not make that possible. However, I did not think that my employment objective as a computer operator was unrealistic.

With Dad's help I created a resume for myself. I dressed as professionally as possible, setting up appointments, going to interviews, and pounding the pavement with Dad chauffeuring me around. I persisted in frustration while enrolling at the University of Toledo, where I hoped to concentrate on a four-year degree in information systems. I was again discouraged when informed that it would take me an additional three and a half years to achieve that goal. Reluctantly, I enrolled in their University College Individualized Study program. Beaten down, I also took a part time job as a dishwasher in a restaurant.

After spending thirty days in the halfway house, Dad approached Grandma, his 92 year-old mother, about my moving in with them. Though she had never associated or lived in such close proximity with a black person before, she agreed to my moving in. My parole officer approved of it, though he also required me to participate in an outpatient drug pro-

gram, in accordance with a stipulation of my parole. Grandma was small and in poor health, but very trusting and loving. She was ever-full of high spirits. I had never known anyone so elderly, and when I listened to her, it was as if God were speaking. She got used to me quickly, always full of hope, prayers, and encouragement for me to succeed. I moved into the basement of the house where Dad had lived when his father was alive. It was roomy and comfortable. I felt very much loved and cared about. After moving in, I took over painting the house. Painters had finished three sides before Dad let them go and I took over.

I continued looking for full time employment until I got a job with a young black guy who ran a janitorial service. The job entailed my being confined inside a major department store overnight to clean and polish floors, bathrooms, and empty trash. The job paid me five dollars an hour under the table. Meanwhile, Dad patiently helped me to get my first ever driver's license, and shortly following, my own car. It was a 1981 Buick LeSabre that meant a great deal to me. He helped me to get it insured, and I ordered personalized license plates that read "ARCHEE." Dad even added my name to one of his major credit cards.

Dad's help, love, and concern for me did not stop there. He was aware of my desire for a mate, and encouraged my relationship with Yvonne, while watching how vulnerable and susceptible I was to pursuing any woman that seemed attractive to me. As the time grew near for Yvonne's planned school trip, he offered to purchase a round trip ticket for her from Kingston, Jamaica to Miami, and a one-way ticket from Miami to Toledo. Yvonne's aunt had no idea that Yvonne had plans other than the school trip. During this period I was also having problems with the drug program. School had begun,

and with working a fulltime job, I resented the program's demands. Though I drank an occasional beer, I did not use any drugs. Nor did I mind the weekly drug testing of my urine. However, I was required to pay for each urine test, and attend counseling sessions with a probing female counselor whom I did not like.

When Yvonne arrived in this country on July 22, 1990, Dad and a female friend of his met her at the airport. I was locked up in the county jail. The drug counselor apparently not liking my attitude, and my unwillingness to discuss my family or my past, informed my parole officer, and he had me put in jail. It was for the purpose of forcing me to be more cooperative, and to show me who had the power. It only angered me more that I was punished for not wanting to disclose intimate and personal things. I stayed in jail for five days before I was released, speaking daily with Yvonne over the phone, and having my job reserved. Dad and I had already discussed the possibility of Yvonne and I not truly liking one another after meeting in person, in which case Dad was willing to arrange her fare back home. But the day I got home from jail I knew that I would remain committed to loving her, allowing no other woman to possess me in life except her.

Yvonne and I made our home in the basement, and were very happy just being together. On August 2, 1990 we were married in grandma's living room, just two weeks after her arrival to this country. We decided to get married and exchange our vows at home for Grandma's convenience. We did not have many friends anyway, but Scott Kisslinger traveled from Columbus to attend, and Dad's female friend also attended.

Yvonne's aunt back in Jamaica did not take the news of her remaining in the states and marrying very well. Neither did her other relatives, but her aunt was especially angry at Yvonne's

deception, taking it as a personal affront, predicting all sorts of doom, and admonishing her to return home right away so that she might save her job before certain deportation. As a family, Yvonne, Dad, and I had already begun the process of applying for her permanent residency, with the assistance of an agency that services immigrants. It required our making a trip to Cleveland's Immigrations Offices where a follow up appointment was scheduled for December 3rd, and where I also took some time to visit and impress family whom I could get in touch with (including my biological father), and old friends.

I had been working as a janitor for well over a month when a young white female stock worker complained to a manager that I had sexually harassed her. It was a completely unfounded and unsubstantiated accusation, in which my response was to quit the job. Regardless as to my innocence I knew how the parole authority would treat it if they heard about it. As it turned out, another female stock worker and my boss persuaded me to stay on. A few weeks later, however, I was approached by another manager with what I thought to be another unfounded accusation. At that point I did quit the job, even after learning that it was not a new accusation, but that particular manager's first hearing of it. I quickly secured another job as a part time dishwasher, and also received notification of my being employed by the U.S. Postal Service.

The week before I was to begin my job as a casual employee (temporary) working as a mail handler, I got a late night call from Paul. He was living in Chicago, married to Denise (the one I had been attracted to, and who had visited me in jail). They had a family of six children, and though Paul was unemployed, she worked as a nurse. I had spoken with Paul by phone on a few occasions since moving in with Dad, and I was aware that he and his wife were not quite getting along

at times. This was due in part to his not being of the same Islamic convictions as she, but also her suspicion that he was having an affair with someone. I had only recently found out from him that as a result of cigarette smoking and unsafe auto painting practices he had a partial lung removed, and was pretty much confined to the house and watching the children while his wife worked. On the night of his call his wife had kicked him out of the home, and he was about forty-five miles outside of Chicago at an Indiana toll gate, out of gas, and no place to go.

As a brother, Paul had never been very caring or supportive of me, so I did not feel at all obligated to help him, though in my heart I wanted to. However, Dad being the munificent man that he is, thought we should, despite having shared with me the mounting debts we had and the possibility of having to sell the house. I did not want to sell the house, for it was there that so much of my life had really began. I hoped that my employment at the post office would help, though the job would only last until June, provided no health benefits, and paid a mere five dollars an hour. I was also struggling with a full course load of school. That night, with Yvonne at my side, I drove several hundred miles to meet Paul, filling his small gas tank twice, and escorting him back to Toledo with us.

Dad had already begun chauffeuring Yvonne around to look for a job, made difficult because of her education and training not being wholly recognized in this country. After a short time of searching however she did take on a job at a day-care center that primarily services the children of professional workers in the area. In helping Paul, I aided him in taking the dishwashing job that I let go to begin working at the post office. Unaware at the time, Dad was giving Paul money to help repair his car, and obtain clothing to take back home to

his kids. In his free time Paul attended drug meetings as a recovering addict. I had learned that both he and our real father had lived together and smoked cocaine during a period of my incarceration.

Paul accompanied Yvonne and I to our December 3rd appointment at the immigration office in Cleveland. There, a case manager concluded after interviewing Yvonne that she had misrepresented herself to enter this country, and as a result she would have to leave when her visa expired the following month. Specifically, she had been questioned on her visa application as to whether she had a fiance in the U.S., to which she answered no. The case manager determined that she had lied, that I had been her fiance at the time. We were very dejected by the news, unsure of what to do. I was so disappointed that I did not want to honor a prior commitment to visit my step-brother Henry when I came to Cleveland. I regretfully did so anyway.

We arrived at his home where he lived with his mother, Virginia. Stephen was presently in the Marines. I had heard that Henry was involved in selling drugs, but not being a user at the time, I did not question it. On this particular day I watched as we sat at a dining room table and he rolled a marijuana cigarette and laced it with crack. When he passed it to me and I hit it also. At the time I was simply made aware of the high I had forgotten, never even considering the ramifications. Just days after returning to Toledo, I had found and bought crack on my own. Paul went back to Chicago, reaching an understanding with his wife, and I had been actively addicted for two weeks before confessing to Yvonne and Dad.

Dad had known something was wrong because I had begun lying to them, and asking frequently for money. He discovered my having conned my former dishwashing employer out of

one hundred dollars. I had done the same to a minister of a church Yvonne and I had begun attending regularly. I truly felt bad about the things I was doing. I stole from our house, and sold my own possessions. Things got worse as I missed days from work and was eventually fired. Grandma's health was getting worse, the house was up for sale, I could not be trusted, money was scarce and what little there was, I wasted. And then, Yvonne got pregnant.

I knew that I had to do something, but I still wanted to get high also. I finally resolved myself to go to my parole officer, with whom I had a good rapport with. I asked him if he would help me by locking me up just so I could realize several days of sobriety. I told him that I had went to a detoxification center, but had walked away after two days. I did not tell him that I had even drove myself alone to Chicago to spend three days with my brother in an attempt to have a few days sobriety, but left there after two days also. My parole officer said that he could only keep me locked up in the county jail for thirty days. Any longer than that would mean returning to prison. He agreed to hold me there, and would set up another drug program for me to participate in when I got out. Yvonne and Dad remained supportive through it all, but I knew I had tried them both. They could clearly see more than I that I was destroying myself and our family. I could see, but the drug provoked me to ignore the pain I caused them. Shortly before I was to be released from the county jail, my wife had a miscarriage.

I was not out of jail for two weeks when I was back to smoking crack. It is not even possible to list all the lies I told, the wrongs I did, and the money I wasted. Of myself, I felt that I had really not accomplished anything. All that I had achieved or acquired, Yvonne and Dad made possible. I was concerned and worried that I would never be able to substantially con-

tribute anything towards our future health and security as a family. Though I felt confident of my knowledge and abilities, even a data entry job, or any entry level office position seemed unattainable for me. To secure a menial paying labor job that would offer health benefits seemed just as impossible. And yet, I felt and wanted the responsibility of caring for my wife and father.

I remember the people I got high with, those who used me, those who waited for me to come over knowing that I would have drugs, those women who were stinking and dirty, and those men whom I looked at and reasoned that I was not as bad off as and could therefore keep smoking. I remember all the waste, the money, the friends, and the potential friends. I remember my own stupidity and that of others. I remember the fear of dying that did not stop me from smoking more. I remember the many alcohol and drug meetings I went to, and how I felt about them always seeming to be located in crack-infested areas. I remember of my own will and initiative taking Dad before a notary public and signing my car over to him, feeling as if I did not deserve the car, and the notary saying I should charge Dad one dollar. I remember that I had to get high just to again get the courage to turn myself over to my parole officer.

My parole officer's report to the parole board read of my sincerity, but of my leaving no other options but to revoke my parole. Yvonne and Dad were present at the revocation hearing, sharing with the board all I had done to try to quit. The board gave me six months to serve, and reinstated my parole for December 12, 1991. As a condition of my parole I can only be released to an in-patient drug program, which it is also my responsibility to arrange. I was sent to the Madison Correctional Institution to serve my time as a parole violator.

Here at Madison, I have written these words in my spare time, while also working in the prison kitchen. As the completion of this book draws near, my mind is reinforced with the belief that even in tough circumstances a person can accomplish positive things. Still, I do not see this work as a cureall, but rather as another life option. I pray that sharing my experiences and opinions does not encourage the overwhelming negative connotations already associated with black males. And too, as my release draws near, I do not regret turning myself over to the parole authorities. At the time I was certain that nothing short of death or imprisonment could deter me from using drugs. So, for a time this concrete and steel has fought my battle, though ever aware that my addiction will greet me at the front gate. What I have gained is a period of sobriety whereby I can more easily pursue and envision a continuation of like mind and living outside of chains. More importantly to me is Yvonne, Dad, and the hope of Abagail, the family and hope God has given me out of the most unusual circumstances and places. To God and family I will not waver in giving myself and all that I can possibly be.

The End

AFTERWORD

ARCHIE WAS TO live for fourteen more years.

Though at the time his written story closed, he had the support of Dad, Yvonne and a renewed faith in God, Archie's old habits persisted: drugs, theft and parole violation. Archie had difficulty controlling his violent outbursts. In one instance, he had been mugged and his jacket stolen so he threatened to get a gun to retaliate. Another time, he had physically cornered Jack and demanded money for drugs. This kind of behavior made Jack call the police and have him arrested three times over the course of their friendship. Archie was so frequently in prison that over the years Jack spent more time with Yvonne than he did with Archie. Jack would tell him, "You're living life on an installment plan."

Despite Archie's difficulties, my Grand Uncle Jack insists that Archie was ultimately a good person: "Archie would give you the shirt off his back. He had a heart for other people who were down and out." Archie often gave Jack greeting cards "for no reason at all." And, he says, Archie was smart. "He was so sharp in his own way." In fact, representing himself, Archie petitioned the United States Court of Appeals Sixth Circuit to review his sentence which had been changed from concurrent to consecutive. However, in 1998 his petition was denied.

Archie's marriage to Yvonne was to prove less fruitful than Archie had hoped. For years, Yvonne had hidden much of Archie's past from her matriarch, Aunt Edna, who saw the whole picture when she eventually visited from Jamaica. Being a successful businesswoman, she felt Archie's lifestyle was not good enough for Yvonne. "You call this a life?" she asked. During this visit Archie felt neglected by Yvonne who was spending most of her time attending to her aunt. Furious, he kicked Yvonne and Aunt Edna out of their home. They went to stay at Jack's apartment a few blocks away, and Jack came to stay with Archie. Jack tried unsuccessfully to make a reconciliation. Archie phoned Yvonne pleading to let him come over, but she refused. A few days later, Jack returned to his apartment to find Yvonne and Aunt Edna missing. Reeling from uncertainty, Archie wouldn't eat for three days. A week later, he received a letter from Yvonne informing him that she had gone to Jamaica with her aunt and though it was "the hardest thing she ever did in her life," she would not be returning. After nine years of marriage, Archie never spoke to or saw Yvonne ever again.

Archie was eternally frustrated with romance. He couldn't do what he considered the most basic thing in life: get a wife, girlfriend or lover. Jack says that with women, "he tried and tried."

Archie, again searching for a mate, gave away all ten original copies of his memoir to women that he had courted over the years. Presumably, his written story did not win them over as he never found another partner. And with that failure, so too went his hope for Abigail. A hope brought painfully close by two of Yvonne's miscarriages. One almost to nine months.

In the spring of 2006, Archie was diagnosed with lung cancer. His doctor correctly told him he had six months to live. Archie became much more religious in those final months: he read the Bible every day and preached to whoever might listen. Though even in hospice he couldn't escape his habits and he made a friend with whom he shared a crack pipe. On August 31st, after several weeks of fighting a lung infection and six weeks short of his forty-ninth birthday, Archie died with Dad by his side.

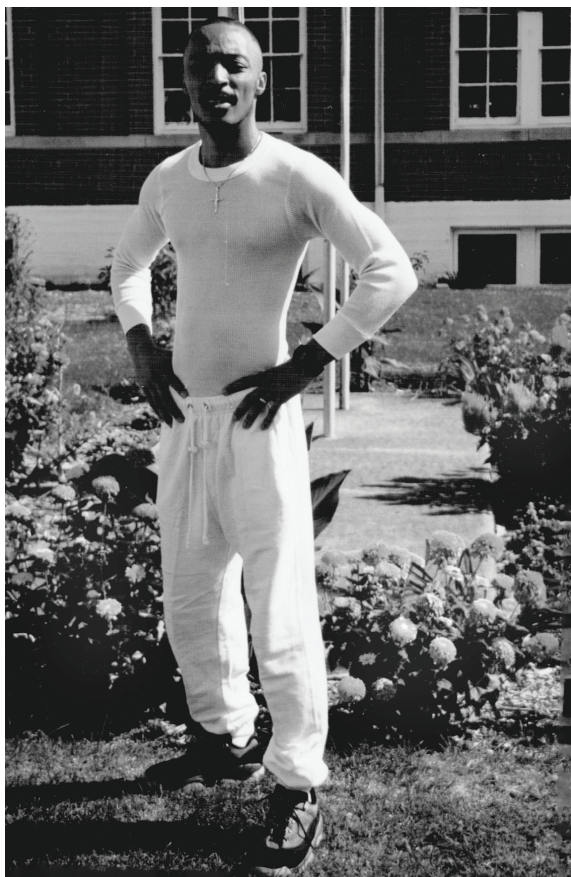
"I lost my heart to the guy," my grand uncle told me. "I never knew anyone as thoroughly as I knew Archie." Despite the loss, he stays positive by appreciating all that he gained from the twenty years he knew his most fulfilling friend. "I learned to not judge people. If you look long and hard at somebody, no matter who they are, you'll see the good in them no matter their weaknesses." And even though his romantic pursuits were wonderfully sidetracked by Archie, Jack still hasn't given up on finding a wife, now more than three decades later. Past ninety years on Earth, he is still hopeful: "somebody by God's grace could step in."

And as for my relative who I was seeking: I did eventually meet Gene. I told him what I needed to tell him, and he told me what I needed to hear.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Archie I. Floyd, Jr.

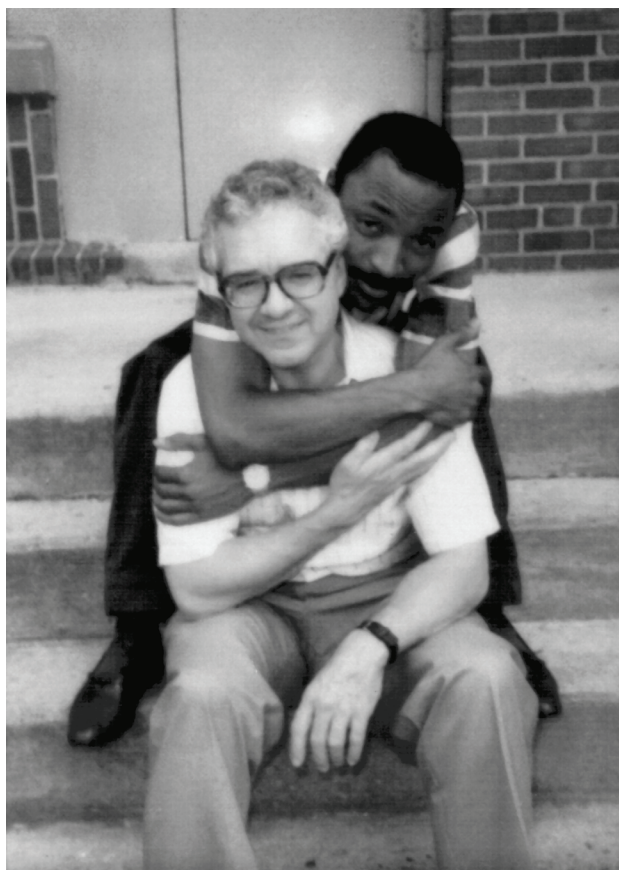


Archie





Jack and Archie



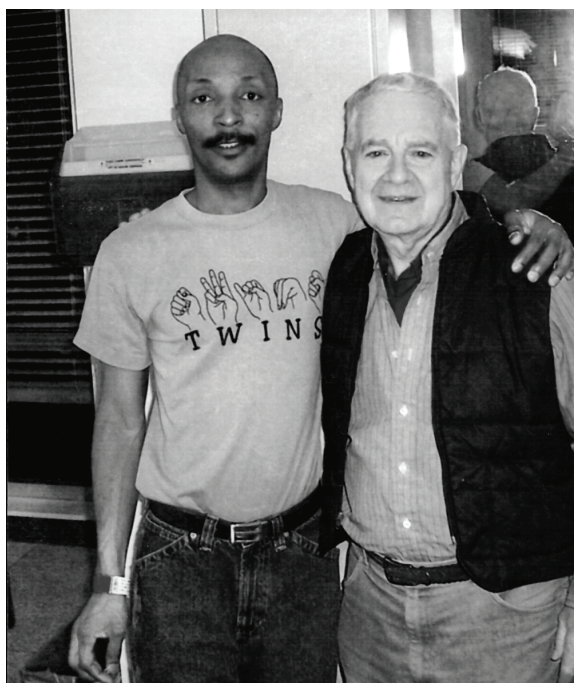


Yvonne





Archie and Jack



ARCHIE MADE IT clear that his goal for writing his story was to help others avoid the mistakes he had made. He was particularly concerned with the welfare of black men in America. And he did, for a time, study computer science. With that in mind, all proceeds from the sale of this book will be donated to the Hidden Genius Project, an Oakland-based charity that “trains and mentors black male youth in technology creation, entrepreneurship, and leadership skills to transform their lives and communities.”

Thanks Mike!

