

**SCOUNDRELS IN PARADISE**

**A TRUE STORY**

**BY**

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**WITH**

**JOHN GREENBURG**

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**The events described in this book are true. Some names have been  
changed for purposes of privacy.**

**PROLOGUE**

**Even Good Stock Sometimes Has A Few Black Sheep**

**My first childhood memory is a vision from the bottom of a swimming pool.  
I was two years old and playing with a few of my neighborhood friends in**

**Downey, California when I happened to fall into their backyard pool. I recall frantically trying to get my head above water, but despite my efforts, I landed on the bottom of the deep end. I stared up through the rippling water to the surface, where I could make out only the fuzzy outline of my mother. Fortunately, my older brother Michael noticed I was missing and dove in to save me.**

**That feeling of sinking and then desperately struggling to reach the surface and keep my head above water has remained a constant companion. Ever since then, I spent a great deal of my life in over my head; nearly drowning in a deep pool of authoritarianism, materialism and greed that always seemed to surround me. Over the years, I developed an aversion to authoritarianism and materialism, and I have tried not to become a greedy, materialistic person with a rigid mindset. But in the environment I grew up in, it was like trying to remain dry while floating in a swimming pool.**

**I've lived my entire life, to some degree, in the shadow of past generations of my relatives. I had an older, Adlai Stevenson, who was a two-time Democratic presidential candidate and American Ambassador to the United Nations during the Cuban Missile Crisis. I remember as a kid sitting in the living room, watching on our black and white television set as my relative announced: "We'll be here until hell freezes over." I couldn't help but feel that spark of pride. The world may have been bracing for nuclear warfare, but my family was standing tall. Over the years, doors have opened for me specifically because of my lineage, but when they close again, as they all inevitably do, there's always a sense of not quite measuring up. Now, in looking back, although I share some of his stubborn resolve, I find I've forged a path in stark contrast to the famous politician I'm named after.**

**My father's name was Theodore Richard Stevenson. Everyone called him "Ted," but his World War II buddies called him "Steve." I guess they did that because his last name was Stevenson. I always called him "Dad," but my older brothers were far less formal and eventually called him "Ted." I suppose I was somewhat different from my older brothers; and that was from the very beginning.**

**My father was the youngest of three children. His father was a first cousin to Adlai Stevenson, which made my dad a second cousin to Adlai. My paternal grandfather was in law enforcement and security. Grandpa was on the Glendale, California police force. He wore badge number three; meaning he was one of the first officers ever hired by that department. He would often be assigned to stand on the corner of Colorado and Brand Boulevard, just down from the police station.**

He had a secure relatively safe job, but he wanted more out of life. In February of 1925, he ended up buying his own security company for a whopping \$1.500. The firm he bought was called Patrick's Security Patrol. It had contracts to guard estates on Pasadena's millionaire row, many of which belonged to some of America's wealthiest old money crowd.

I remember my dad telling me stories about how my grandpa would take him out on patrols. Often during the hot summers, Dad would use the pool at the old Wrigley Mansion. The mansion consisted of a beautiful 18-room home that was owned by the chewing gum magnet William Wrigley Jr. Dad would tell me stories of how he used to delight in watching the Tournament of Roses Parade every New Year's from the lawn of that mansion. I often wonder if perhaps my father began to acquire a taste for the high life from his experiences on millionaire row. He fondly remembered that place. Dad never went to church during Christmas time, but he would pile all his kids into his car and then he would take them for an annual family drive to see the Christmas lights and decorations on the lawns of those big mansions.

The Wrigley mansion is now well known as "Tournament House" and is the official headquarters of the Tournament of Roses Association. It houses the office where the world famous Rose Bowl and Rose Parade are currently managed from.

I come from "good stock," as my mother always said, and that runs deeper than the connections to Adlai Stevenson on my father's side. Mom's name was Lida Margaret Arnold Stevenson. Dad sometimes called her "Margie," as did her friends. She was a down-to-earth person despite her pampered childhood. Her uncle was William Holloway, Governor of Oklahoma from 1929 to 1931, a man, she fondly recalled, who "gave people jobs during the Depression." He happened to be "kissing cousins" with President Lyndon Baines Johnson.

She often told us about the time she played in the governor's mansion when she attended a family gathering there as a child. There was a ballroom on the third floor, and she and her cousins slipped off their shoes and slid along the heavily waxed dance floor in their stocking feet. She had a lot of stories to tell, including one about her cousin Billy locking her in a bathroom in the governor's mansion for hours. Billy eventually went on to become a powerful Federal Judge and in fact, he was appointed by LBJ.

My mom was also related to Amon Carter, the man TCU's football stadium is named for and a pioneer in American commercial aviation. In addition, her side of the family fought in the Civil War and World War I. Many times she would stridently say: "I am SO proud to be an American!"

**She was born in 1922, in Texarkana, Texas. Whenever mom talked about the place, she would say: “The town was on the border of Texas and Arkansas. That’s how the town got its name. It was RIGHT ON the border. In fact, the state line ran right through the middle of town. One set of my grandparents lived on one side of the line, while the other grandparents lived on the other side of the line. I grew up in the same neighborhood and about the same time as Ross Perot.”**

**Mom would use her recollection of Perot, the billionaire who shook up the 1992 presidential campaign, as a way of teaching the values we would need to achieve success. She would say: “My aunt’s first husband was a newspaper publisher for the ‘Texarkana Gazette’ and at the age of fifteen, Perot created his own paper route for the Gazette. He offered to deliver papers in New Town, which was a poor part of Texarkana that had no paper delivery service. Because the Gazette did not think Perot could succeed in New Town, the newspaper offered him a higher-than-average commission. Rather than walking from house to house, Ross, who was still just a boy, worked the route first on horseback and then later on a bicycle. Perot shocked his bosses by quickly turning a profit. He was so successful that within two years, the Gazette was trying to back out of its deal to pay Perot a higher commission. Only by appealing to the paper’s publisher was Perot able to hold his employers to their promise.”**

**Mom would tell us her Ross Perot story in order to teach us two things. The first lesson was that we should be creative and “think outside the box” when we had problems to solve, and we should not be afraid of hard work. She also wanted us to know that we should always be ready to stand up for our rights and be willing to battle for what we were entitled to.**

**Though morally and ethically Mom came from good stock, there was at least one serious health issue in the gene pool. My grandmother on my mother’s side had an eye condition that rendered her legally blind. Both my oldest brother Ron and I inherited that condition.**

**Grandma Arnold did not seek treatment from specialists because she belonged to the Christian Scientist Church. When my mother was born, one of my grandmother’s cousins was named Ella, and she was a Christian Scientist nurse. Ella assisted with the delivery of my mother. This was back in the days when most people were born in their homes. No doubt about it, religion played a big part in Mom’s life from the very beginning. She often said: “Your grandmother prayed that I would be a loving little girl.” I’m sure the same could be said about her hopes for her own children.**

**Mom often told me about her earliest memories, probably because I was the sibling most interested in them. She would say: “The first thing I remember was when I was four years old. I saw a Victrola on a table. I got up on a stool to wind it up and make it play. I got it to work, and music came out from a phonograph record. The song was ‘Over There.’ It was a song from World War I about a little girl whose father was overseas fighting.”**

**She remembered that song from World War I, but Mom had no fond memories of being part of a nation at war. War and violence were things that definitely turned Mom off. She would say: “It is hard for me to understand people who want to fight and hunt and kill people.” She also took great pride in the fact that she was a person who was straight as an arrow and who tried her best to live a good, honest life. I even heard her say to my father on more than one occasion: “If you ever get involved in anything dishonest, our marriage will be over.”**

**My mother was a sweet person. She always put her kids first, especially her youngest child Mark. It is a shame that her oldest and her youngest caused her such heartache. Her oldest, Ron, was very greedy and her youngest, Mark, was seriously mentally ill and dangerous.**

**While Mom was growing up, her dad had a good job and was doing well, but he lost his job during the Depression. Her uncle, the governor, arranged a job for him with the IRS in Oklahoma. It is ironical that three of her sons grew up to become violators of many IRS rules and laws. Her father went to Oklahoma to work and even though the job paid a decent wage for those days, it still took him a long time to save up enough money to relocate his family. Mom didn’t move to Oklahoma City until her last year of high school.**

**Oklahoma City was where my parents met during World War II. At the time, my father was stationed at a nearby military base because he was serving in the U.S. Army. He was one of the very first Army Rangers. Back then, he was 6’ 0” tall and weighed 160 to 170 pounds. He was a very lean, good-looking guy. She was a pretty brunette working in a Western Union office at the time. He proposed to her just before being shipped out to the Pacific to fight in New Guinea and the Philippines. She accepted and they became engaged.**

**My dad was a war hero. He was wounded eleven times, awarded four Purple Hearts and had the honor of a General pinning a Silver Star on his chest for his heroics in New Guinea. Dad had picked off two Japanese machine gun nests. At one point, he had to engage in brutal hand-to-hand**

combat with the enemy. Only six men in his unit came back from the battlefield alive.

He was sent to military hospitals to recover from his wounds. The bullet and knife wounds healed, but his back had been severely injured and he suffered from that back injury for the rest of his life. He tried not to show it, but there were times when his face or the way he walked revealed the excruciating pain he was going through. He was in pain all the time.

My father had an outstanding war record, but the sad part about it was that for some reason, my dad didn't think his war record was quite good enough and he embellished it. He was just plain greedy for attention and adulation. He told many people that he had been a General. Late in life, he also told them that he had won the Congressional Medal of Honor. He even obtained a phony Medal of Honor that he was bold enough to actually wear in public. When my father passed away, he was buried with full military honors, but no one was invited to the funeral because the family didn't want his fraudulent statements about his rank and his medals exposed.

Mom and Dad were married upon his return from the Pacific in 1944. He was stationed at Camp Ashley in Virginia at that time, which was being used as a German POW camp. So, they were married in Rickman, Virginia. They didn't want to live on the base, but there was a terrible shortage of housing at the time. At first, they had to rent a room in a doctor's home in Princess Ann, Virginia. After a month, they were able to rent a room with a kitchen.

Mom decided to get a job working at the local Western Union office. She sometimes told us about the time she was waiting for a bus to take her to work. There was one other person at the bus stop; a black woman. When the bus pulled up, Mom stepped aside to let the black woman get on first, but the driver told the black woman she couldn't get on. The driver pointed at my mom, indicating that she should get on first. Mom said: "I really felt bad, as we had black people who worked for us as a child and I loved them. I was taught you don't mistreat people." I have to credit my mom's belief that "we are all brothers" as being the main reason I was able to avoid becoming racist.

After Mom had worked in Princess Ann for six months, Dad decided to get out of the service so they could go back out west. Since they didn't have a real honeymoon, they decided to go to New York City for a week before they headed to the West Coast. The trip to the Big Apple proved to be an adventure. They had to catch a ferry boat in Virginia which took them to a town where they could catch a train. The train was very old. It had gas lights, wooden seats and it burned coal. There was some inconvenience

involved because there was a war going on, but they had a good time during the week they spent in the Big Apple.

After their brief and belated honeymoon, Mom and Dad made their way west and settled in Downey, California. Five kids followed: Ronald Richard, Michael Craig, my sister Teddi Gayle, me, and then Mark Arnold. The age differences spanned fourteen years. We were a formidable clan and kept my father out working to keep up the lifestyle while my mother dutifully managed the household.

My mom came across as a “Leave it to Beaver” wife like June Cleaver, or the mom in “The Brady Bunch.” She was a good-looking Texan gal. She had a kind of a drawl and said “Ya’ll” a lot; as in: “Ya’ll have a good time at Disneyland, now.” She was the epitome of Southern civility, politeness and food. She used to make cornbread, fried okra and black-eyed peas. Mom was positive, optimistic, upbeat and deeply religious. Over the years, she became devoted to Dr. Robert Schuller’s Crystal Cathedral, in Orange County. In time, Schuller’s book, “My Journey,” became her mantra.

Meanwhile, my dad’s lifestyle took a different path from Mom’s. He was a very good-looking guy; too good-looking. Truth be told, he was a dad and a husband by day, and a playboy at night. He was cheating on my mom; screwing his red-headed secretary. He also saw no harm in having extramarital affairs when he was away on his numerous business trips. Dad was really into red heads. If a woman had red hair; my father was on her like bees on honey.

Dad didn’t go to college, but he lied about having a degree. He always told people he went to UCLA and majored in business. He lied about a lot of things, and this made me very uncomfortable at times because it put me in very bad positions.

In addition, my dad had a habit of shoplifting. To the best of my knowledge, he only did this at hardware stores and chain grocery stores. He never picked on the little guys. He would walk in really well dressed with a nice suit on and then he would shoplift small parts and tools at hardware stores or spices at grocery stores. He would just stick them in his pocket.

I remember the times I would be sitting in the car, waiting for Dad to come out of the store. He would come out to the car and unload his pockets, and there would be all these items. On each of these occasions, I never saw any bag or any receipt. I didn’t like that at all. I thought it was just too weird. He could have easily afforded the cost of the merchandise.

Another strange thing about his shoplifting was that he didn't really need the stuff. He would steal misting heads for sprinkler systems and little things like spices that he'd gripe about being "so damned expensive." He'd go to his neighbor and say: "Look, I got you a misting head. Why don't you try it out? Here, I'll even put it on for you."

The reason he did it was to feed his ego. He was probably bragging to his neighbors about how well he was doing in business because he seemed to embellish everything in his life. All of these things contributed to his front. He felt compelled to play the role of a generous war hero who was like a god.

To the best of my knowledge, Dad never changed. Towards the end of his life, he had a friend who was CEO of a prominent telecommunications company. He'd go over to his friend's house to watch over the place whenever the friend was gone. He'd hang pictures for him and do all sorts of things for free. Whenever he visited me in Bali, Dad was always doing things for my friends for free, like putting a misting system into one of my friend's orchid garden. He brought all the hardware he needed from the U.S., and I suspect he shoplifted all that equipment. Even to the very end of his life, he was still stealing just because he was greedy for adulation.

Dad had a strange code of conduct. He would never rip off anyone while in the course of doing business. He would never scam anyone for money. He would never lie to get something from somebody. When it came to the realm of business, he would never cheat. But Dad had a dark side.

He did things that even as a little kid I didn't really approve of. Deep down inside, I was very uncomfortable with his twisted view of morality. In my later years, I became fully aware of the effect my dad's behavior had upon not only me, but the entire family.

To be perfectly honest, my dad was a very complicated man. With all his lies about his war record and his academic achievements, you might think he was a selfish man; but for some people, he would give them the shirt off his back.

There were times he could be super generous and compassionate. I recall many weekends when he helped the neighbors with their home repairs... for free. He was really involved with plastic plumbing pipes, and derived an unusual satisfaction from working with anything that involved plastics.

In the latter stages of his working life, after I was born in 1954, my dad was never less than a vice-president of a corporation. This was back in the days when the military-industrial complex was in high gear and more important, the factories producing the goods needed were practically all

within the continental United States. There was money and jobs for anybody who wanted to work because the Baby Boom generation was still just kids and teenagers; and everyone was hopeful of the huge potential market. America was THE world power. All the corporations were making big bucks and new products were coming out every day.

Chasing the brass ring of THE big job in THE biggest corporation meant lots of relocation. From my earliest days in Downey, California, our family moved around constantly... to Ohio for a few years, to Alhambra, California, to Anaheim, and then to the San Fernando Valley.

Dad was an excellent salesman. He had an unbelievable sales talent; a true gift. He was diplomatic, a good negotiator and a master at persuasion. After leaving the service, he went to work as a salesman for Lever Brothers, selling such products as Lux Soap. He then moved on to a more lucrative position as a salesman for Nesbitt's Corporation, which produced soft drinks. He worked for that company for ten years.

One of the big accounts he landed was McDonald's. In fact, the first McDonald's was in Downey, just down the street from where I was born. That was when McDonald's was still owned by the McDonald brothers and their hamburgers were nineteen cents. Ray Kroch was the person who bought out the McDonald brothers and took McDonald's from being a drive-in to being a restaurant. I first recall going to the "Golden Arches" when I was about three years old. This was in 1957, when McDonald's was strictly a West Coast operation.

Dad had his sights set on bigger things, bigger even than fat commission checks. He wanted a position in top management, and he realized that it would require expertise in a specific field that was "the next big thing." So, he became an expert on plastic pipe. Dad was not only a man who looked good in his suit and tie, tall and impressive, with dark hair and a smooth voice; he was also right about the enormous potential for plastic products. He may not have had a college degree, but he was a very well read man: Especially when it came to science and technology.

He became so knowledgeable and creative about new uses for plastics that that he was hired as a top executive for the Carlon Corporation in Chagrin Falls, Ohio. One of their leading products was hula hoops marketed under the name of TV personality Art Linkletter. You may not remember Linkletter, but he had the original "Kids Say the Darnedest Things" show back in the 1950's. Dad also secured a deal for Carlon to line the Tom Sawyer attraction and jungle rides at Disneyland so that water would be kept inside the rides and wouldn't seep into the sandy Anaheim soil.

While he was with Carlon, my dad got involved with Japanese auto manufacturer Mitsubishi. He was selling them plastic piping. They ended up copying his stuff and making it themselves, but it was a nice ride while it lasted. Dad flew to Japan several times on business. I'll never forget him bringing home kimonos for the whole family, along with a great recipe for sukiyaki.

He became a close friend of Mitsubishi's chairman of the board, and he even brought him to our home in Ohio on more than one occasion. Early in their relationship, they had discovered that by a quirk of fate, the chairman of the board had been one of the prisoners my father captured when he was fighting in New Guinea during World War II. This seemed to forge a very strong bond between them.

The chairman of the board was quite a gun enthusiast, and he even had a gun range in his home back in Japan; which is a country with very strict gun control laws. Prior to one of my dad's trips to Japan, he purchased a Colt .45 six-shooter; complete with holster and cartridge belt: A full Western rig. He intended to give it to his friend as a gift. Dad actually wore that getup under his overcoat on the airplane. Of course, that was back in the very early 1960's when there was little airport security compared to today. When he arrived in Japan, my dad opened his overcoat and flashed the getup to his friend. At the sight of it, the chairman of the board let out an excited "Ah so!"

The chairman of the board reciprocated for the fancy Western six-shooter by supplying my dad with geishas. Dad kept pictures taken of him sitting around with the geishas, and he hid the incriminating photos in a closet. I remember finding those pictures. I looked at them and then I put them back exactly where I found them. I didn't mention anything about it to my mother, and I didn't say a word of it to Dad.

My dad also kept a lot of war trophies in that closet. He had a bayonet, a .30-06 Springfield rifle and a knife he had made for himself while he was in the Rangers. He had taken a set of brass knuckles and soldered a really sharp double-edged blade onto them. He kept that menacing weapon in his combat boots, and I could imagine it being used with startling effectiveness upon the enemy. He also had his Army uniform hanging in the closet for years along with his heroic medals he was so proud of, such as his Silver Star and four Purple Hearts.

In addition to those war trophies, my dad had an old Civil War gun, a pirate's flintlock pistol and a little pistol with three notches on it that belonged to his grandfather. It had an octagonal shaped barrel, and it was probably used in World War I. After my father passed away, I was angered

when I found out my brother Michael had taken all those family heirlooms and sold them for drug money.

When Dad was hired by Carlon as a vice president, he was paid \$22,000 a year, which was a very high salary in 1958. Mom and Dad built a California style home in Ohio, and my youngest brother Mark was born there in 1959. Even though my dad had a high-paying job, they weren't happy in Ohio; especially my mother. She just didn't like the cold winters.

When they got back to California in 1963 (just in time to watch TV coverage of President John F. Kennedy's assassination), Dad had a tough time finding a job that paid as much as the one he had left in Ohio. He was forced to take a big pay cut, but he worked his way back up to another position as vice-president. Meanwhile, Mom and Dad were still doing well enough to purchase an upscale home in Anaheim.

It wasn't long until Dad achieved company president status, and he leased an office right across from 77 Sunset Strip. That address was famous at the time because of a Warner Brothers private eye TV series of the same name that was a primetime hit TV show in the early 1960's. You may remember Edd "Kookie" Byrnes. He always looked so cool wearing shades and combing his hair so that girls were always cooing: "Kookie, Kookie, lend me your comb." Dad really bought into that lifestyle. In fact, he drove a Thunderbird, just like Stu Bailey, one of the private eyes on the show. He even had a telephone in the T-Bird, which was very unusual back then. At one time, Dad's office space was rented from the legendary comic Lou Costello. I remember going to Sunset Strip when I was ten years old in early 1964. My dad often took me to his office on the weekends, or when there was no school.

After another year or so, Dad was no longer satisfied with that position and continued on the prowl for THE big job. A land development company offered him more money to change jobs. His new employer provided him with an office suite that had at one time belonged to the legendary Howard Hughes. Howard Hughes refused to occupy the office just because he couldn't get his own private elevator in the building. The name of the office building was the Kirkeby Center in Westwood. I still have pictures of that office, with my dad proudly posing while seated on his desk with an American flag in the background. He always displayed an American flag in his offices, but he never hung any paintings.

When you walked into my dad's office, the first thing you would have noticed was the solid mahogany desk in the reception area. He told me it cost \$5,000; which was huge money back in the 1960's. Back then, you could buy a Cadillac fully equipped for just over \$3000. The office was

equipped with a screen the company used to show films of various properties they were promoting. The screen was stored in a slot built into the ceiling. All you had to do to lower it was press a button. For me at the time, it was like something right out of a James Bond movie!

Dad was not only appointed president of that firm, he was also one of the partners in the corporation. They were developing 350 acres in Palm Springs that had formerly been nothing but desert. The project was called "Palm Springs Panorama". They also had a development in North Lake Tahoe. They named that one "Bonanza"; and they hired Lorne Greene (star of the "Bonanza" TV series) to act as their spokesman.

At one point, my dad and his partners bought the Cal Neva Lodge in Lake Tahoe. Frank Sinatra had formerly owned the lodge. It was also where Marilyn Monroe spent the last weekend of her life in August 1962. The thing I remember most about the place was a line painted on the floor, which separated the California side of the casino from the Nevada side, where you could gamble.

Needless to say, we were leading a very comfortable lifestyle. We had a nice home with a beautiful yard. Our house was different from every other one in the neighborhood, and the biggest reason was all the traveling Dad had done in the Orient.

Our entire garden was done in Japanese design. Dad had pine trees that grew low to the ground and looked like windswept bonsai trees. He accomplished that by hanging bricks on them. He also planted Korean grass throughout the front lawn that grew in clumps and wasn't really great to play on. We had a misting system; a custom sprinkling system that emitted a very fine spray of water. That was something my dad had put together in his garage workshop. It was fantastic on hot summer days and really cooled the surrounding areas of the house.

Our living room was designed in a Japanese style with sliding doors and oriental style tables that were built low to the ground. My dad built a fireplace that he filled with pure white sand topped with a large lava rock. He designed it so that fire would come out of the sand and through holes in the rock. It was pretty cool.

Our dining room, though, had a traditional American look to it, with maple furniture and American antique décor. Dad also turned one of the rooms into a beautiful family bar that he decorated with a Scottish theme, complete with our family coat of arms. This was in honor of his Scottish heritage. The room also had carpeting with a Scottish tartan design and red material on the walls.

It had a full wet bar. Dad had made the top of the bar by pouring resin over currency from all over the world. He had also made a classic lamp from an authentic Scottish drum. He was an amazing decorator and loved showing off his creative work to the neighbors as well as guests from out of town.

Although we had the fine home and even a fancy Chrysler Imperial limo with a custom body made by Ghia of Italy in the driveway, my father's success had its downside. He was rarely around, except on weekends when he would either help the neighbors or sit in the Laz-Y-Boy in the living room; drinking a "Rusty Nail" and watching television. The volume on the TV was loud because Dad had bad hearing. He would also play his favorite music on his state of the art reel-to-reel tape deck. The sounds of "Madame Butterfly," "Fiddler on the Roof" and "The Music Man" would fill the house. The music was so loud that I can still hear it today. Neither he nor my mother was strict, and all of us kids went our different ways.

My dad wasn't very affectionate. In some ways he was; in other ways he wasn't. He used to hug me and kiss me on the cheek. He probably did that to my older brothers Ron and Michael when they were little, but I always felt my dad was more affectionate to me than he had been to my older brothers. I remember how he used to call me "Egghead," after my famous cousin Adlai and he loved introducing me to everyone in public as his son, Scott Adlai. I felt like I was sort of his calling card or "conversation opener." This was a way of letting people know he was related to Adlai Stevenson.

I adopted much more of my mother's personality. My mother was a really sweet lady. She'd give you the shirt off her back, and would do that for just about anyone. She was the real nurturer who probably held the family together - to the extent that it could be held together. My mother was constantly in such denial that you could virtually go out and murder someone and my mother would still love you and harbor you. In looking back on it all, I truly believe that my mother was a big reason why things turned out the way they did; she was a classic enabler.

Her youngest child, Mark, was born with a tumor on his back, which the doctors decided not to remove. That in itself was a large burden to bear, but it would prove insignificant compared to how psychologically disturbed Mark turned out to be.

Without a doubt, he was the worst off emotionally and psychologically of all of us. Not being a healthcare professional, I can't specifically cite what his diagnosis was. From what I understand, it was either a problem with connected nerve cells, or it might have been Mark's not having normal-

sized temporal lobes. The bottom line was that he was an impulsive, uninhibited, volatile individual.

The doctors who tested Mark warned Mom that his mental health issues made him a danger to himself and others. She, however, didn't accept this. She would never admit that Mark was so psychologically disturbed that he had to be put away. She nurtured him more than any of us, hanging on to the idea that "love will conquer all." The dangers she had been warned about were verified decades later when my mother had to apply for disability for him. Mark was diagnosed with something worse than schizophrenia; he was diagnosed as a sociopath... a real scary guy.

All of his mental health issues only made my mom love Mark even more. I guess she felt it was her fault that he was the way he was. It was as if she were being punished for having done some terrible thing. She also felt guilty about Ron and I having such terrible eyesight.

Mom was a devoted follower of Christian Science, but she would take her children to see doctors. This was something I don't believe her mother would have done. My grandmother was even more conservative in her Christian Science beliefs, refusing even to take aspirin.

Mom would pray to God all the time, praying that Mark would change. She often told me: "You know how to make it on your own, Mark doesn't." I honestly believe that she would have thrown any of us away if it meant that Mark would be saved.

Ron, on the other hand, was a different story. He graduated from Valencia High with pretty good grades, despite his vision problems. As I have mentioned, it was a hereditary condition that skipped a generation; our mom was spared, but Ron and I suffered with it. Although we could see, our vision, to say the least, was cloudy.

Ron became my first hero, and he sensed that I really looked up to him. He was a good-looking kid with blonde hair and an engaging grin. When it came to looks, the only flaw he had was that his ears were just a little too big for his head.

I had much more in common with Ron than my other older brother, Michael, who tended to bully me by constantly butting into my business. Ron had pretty good grades in high school and tried to get a good job after graduation. The affliction we shared didn't help his job search efforts. He still had hopes of getting hired for a good position because of Dad's connections. Ron landed an interview at a local industrial plant that supplied parts to the airline industry, which was a huge employer in Southern California back then.

His hopes were quickly dashed. “What the hell are you doing here?” The foreman asked after giving Ron a vision test. “We can’t hire you.” It wasn’t so much what the foreman had said, it was the way he said it. He made Ron feel lower than a cigarette butt on the ground; as if he were someone who was useless, completely dependent and would have to be led around for the rest of his life. What made it even worse was that the foreman acted as though Ron was unworthy of being in the same room as him.

When Ron told Dad what happened, my father was appalled at the way his oldest son had been treated. He went over to see his friend at the company that had interviewed Ron, with every intention of delivering a harsh reprimand. He even came right out and asked him: “Why in the world would you say such discouraging things to a kid?”

The foreman was called in to explain to Dad what had happened. All he said was: “I’m sorry to tell you, Mr. Stevenson, that due to insurance reasons, your son is unemployable.” It was obvious that they were just covering their own behinds. I truly believe they just didn’t want the stigma of having a handicapped person around.

Ron was present when the foreman offered his explanation, and he heard the remark about his being unemployable. That together with the looks in their eyes really bothered him, and he came home with the angriest look I had ever seen on his face. I believe that the experience caused Ron to hold the entire world in contempt; and that led to his becoming determined to make it big on his own terms.

After that, my older brother got a minimum wage job at Disneyland and quickly thereafter fell into a life of health food stores, vegetarianism and free love. He’d come home after serving soda to tourists at the Disney’s Golden Horseshoe Review (a venue that was sponsored by Coca Cola Company) while dressed in a white starched shirt and a bow tie with long strings hanging from the ends; attire from the can-can era. The venue was an exact copy of the famous working class ballrooms of Montparnasse Paris of the 1830’s. Ron would finish work, go home, slip on his hippie clothes and head for the beach to hang out with his groovy friends.

For a while, Ron took some junior college courses and said that he wanted to go to broadcasting school. The school said he had a “golden voice” and great potential. They assured him that they could place him with one of the top radio stations. Not only that, the government would pay all the costs because of Ron being legally blind. Everyone in the family was very excited about it. Mom and Dad decided to show their support by buying him a brand new Dodge to use for his commute to and from broadcasting school. That all changed, however, as he became tighter with his hippie

friends. Ron grew a moustache, started wearing his hair a bit longer and started surfing. Next thing we knew, he traded the Dodge in on a VW van.

He practically lived at the beach with what appeared to be laid back friends; but we later came to find out they were highly organized drug dealers. They were all members of the “Brotherhood of Eternal Love” and later became known as the “Hippie Mafia.” Once Ron got into the drug scene and began making big money, he dropped any thoughts of going to school.

He smoked some pot, but I could never honestly say that Ron was a druggie. He always took very good care of himself. He became a strict vegetarian at the age of twenty. Later on in life, he ran miles a day, every day. The ONLY reason he was part of the drug scene was the huge amount of money to be made!

Meanwhile, Michael went to Valencia High School, just like Ron. He played sports and went to junior college for a year to study accounting. Eventually he announced that: “College isn’t for me.” He said: “I’m going into the Army to fight for my country.”

I couldn’t believe it, and neither could Mom. She had conflicted emotions about Michael’s plans. On one hand, she had always said: “I am SO proud to be an American.” But on the other hand, she also said: “It is hard for me to understand people who want to fight and kill.” She was a total anti-war person, especially after seeing what the war had done to my dad. She was not a happy camper and not at all happy about Michael’s goal in life and his intentions of fighting for his country.

On the other hand, I could tell my dad was proud of Michael. He even accompanied Michael to the recruiting station to “let the recruiter know who Michael’s family is.” Dad’s influence and the family name must have helped, because Michael ended up being an aide to a General and didn’t see much combat.

Thanks to Ron, Michael was given a sendoff that was over the edge. Just before Michael boarded the train for the training center in Northern California, Ron gave him a hit of acid which kicked in as soon as Michael arrived at the gates of Fort Ord, the Army post in Monterey. I remember Michael telling me that story and saying: “I opened my eyes and all I could do was see patterns and colors rolling off the walls while the guard at the gate was waving me through.” I always thought it was too bad he didn’t get turned on to LSD earlier because if that had happened, he might never have joined the Army.

He didn’t see much combat and returned home in one piece; at least on the outside. Right after he came back from his tour in Vietnam, Michael took

some accounting courses at a junior college. He married a local girl from Anaheim named Betty. She was of Russian-Mexican descent from a strong Catholic family. Betty's family members were also conservative Republicans. Anaheim is in Orange County, which, back then, was a hotbed of conservative Republicans and right-wingers, such as the John Birch Society.

Michael had two children with Debbie; a boy they called Little Michael and a girl named Michelle. Little Michael grew up to be a baseball player. In fact, he was drafted by the San Francisco Giants, but didn't make the big show after he threw his arm out. Little Michael then went on to become a sports medicine therapist. Michelle manages the cosmetics department of a large retail store.

After Michael's return from Vietnam, I could tell that he had become cynical and bitter. This was quite a contrast from how gung ho he had been when he originally joined the Army. He craved material things, so he started right in with Ron; dealing pot to his military friends. He had a buddy named Mosley he had served with in 'Nam to help him move the merchandise. They started out by selling pot to all the guys they knew who had tried it while they were overseas. That was how he opened up his network. It was small at first, but it really took off as time went by.

My sister Gayle, meanwhile, hung out with a group of Mexicans who drove around in low rider vehicles. Her boyfriend would come around in his '57 Chevy that had been lowered so much in the back that the tailpipes were practically dragging on the asphalt. He had slick, black greasy hair and was a scary looking greaser. He was a certified gang member; a real bad boy. By the time Dad laid down the law to her, it was too late; and she wouldn't listen to him. She eventually realized what a lowlife her boyfriend was, but there was a lot of drama along the way.

And then there was Mark. He was oblivious to it all. He was pampered all his life by my mother, who clung to her last child. Meanwhile, the rest of us ventured for better or for worse out into the world. Mark was a human time bomb waiting to explode. As he grew older, he became more and more divorced from reality and more and more dangerous. He would eventually spend a chunk of his life behind bars for senseless acts of rage and violence.

As to my personal situation while I was approaching my middle school years, my academic record was not as good as Ron's. I had talents, mainly in art and music, but when I was in school no one encouraged me and I had no positive feelings toward school at all. I got terrible grades, but I wasn't a bad kid. I never caused any trouble, but I just did not like school. One

problem was that I couldn't see the blackboard because of my poor eyesight. That was frustrating and embarrassing for me.

My mother took me to see many specialists at the low vision center and they gave me glasses to wear that were literally two mini-telescopes, but I just would not wear them. They also supplied me with big, thick, oversized large-print books, but I refused to even carry them around for fear of being laughed at and bullied by the other kids. I didn't want to be one of those people who would suffer their whole lives because others made fun of them.

I was a good-looking kid and thanks to the influences of Dad and Ron, I was a playboy type. I compensated for my lack of success in school by always wearing the hippest fashions. When bell bottoms were in, I wore them. When paisley shirts were in, that's what I wore. My dad was always willing to buy me clothes, but he wanted me to dress the way he dressed and look the way he looked. He compromised enough so that I could still look "mod." I was a good-looking kid, but a cool outsider with a reputation earned mainly for what I did outside of school.

I would have to say that everything I have ever learned was self-taught. After junior high, I went on to Chatsworth High School in the San Fernando Valley, but I wasn't there for more than a couple of years. That was a brand-new school, and was one of the first "experimental high schools" among the California school districts. Chatsworth High had a loosened dress code that allowed male students to wear longer hair and whatever clothing they wanted. The teachers were seemingly cool and the principal was much more lenient than in other surrounding schools. One of Chatsworth's claims to fame is that it counts actor Val Kilmer among its alumni.

I got "C's" and "D's" mostly, but I got "A's" in art and in physical education. I was great in sports and art. I became very interested in the works of Salvador Dali and other masters, such as Picasso and Marc Chagall. I wasn't much into reading and in fact, I have only read four complete books in my life. The one I remember best is a book my love Yumiko turned me onto. The title of the book is "Illusions: The Adventure of a Reluctant Messiah."

I played on teams, but only in junior high. Most of the sports I participated in were during P.E. class. I was the second best runner in school. I was great at football and great at basketball, but not so good at baseball because the ball was so small that it was difficult for me to see with my poor vision. I love sports, but I have never enjoyed watching sports. The reason I like playing them is because I have to be in the action. I'd much rather be involved with something than sit and second guess somebody else or analyze what's going on. In all fairness to Dad, he tried to

encourage my interest in running and jumping by building a high jump apparatus in our backyard using some PVC pipe and a couple of poles.

I had vision problems, but I was no pushover. I used to fight all the time: up until I was eleven years old. Even though I wasn't a troublemaker, I had to fight with kids, mainly Mexican kids, just to get in and out of the bathroom at school. I would get bullied and made fun of, mainly because of my vision problems, but I wouldn't put up with any shit. If anyone started laughing at me, I'd go for it.

I had a blood feud with one of the neighbor kids and we used to fight all the time. We had knockdown, drag 'em out battles. He would kick my butt one day, and I'd kick his tail the next day. When the peace and love ideas of the Brotherhood of Eternal Love came into my life, however, I lost all desire to fight. I would only fight if I had to, or if somebody messed with a person I loved, especially my family or my friends.

Throughout my life, I have had rare moments of rage when I would really go off; but I have taken my rage out on objects rather than people. On the whole, I am the type who will leave the room and slam the door behind me rather than argue. I have always hated confrontations. This probably all goes back to my mother. She would never confront anybody; and that was one of her big problems. I would do anything to get around confrontations. Ron sensed that, and he used it to manipulate me.

I didn't know it at the time, but the course of my life began to shift when I was twelve years old and we were living in Anaheim. One day, I walked into the den and found my mother watching a black and white documentary that was being aired on television about the island of Bali in the country of Indonesia. I sat down and watched it in full amazement. All the while, my mother stood there watching.

I'll never forget the part of the documentary where it was said: "All the women do the work and all the men do is create artistic works from wood, paint and play music." I thought: "That's my kind of place. That's where I want to go." The two things I most enjoyed doing at that age were art and music.

I said to my mother: "Mom, I want to go to Bali and marry a princess." I didn't realize at the time how prophetic that statement would be. Twelve years later, almost to the day, when I was 24, I did exactly what I had hoped to do.

By the time I was twelve years old, my oldest brother Ron had become such a huge influence on my life that I cast aside any thoughts of sports. Ron's kind of action was even more exciting. He seemed to be part of a

world where people allowed others to be different, where cool things went on and where there was hope for peace and love.

### **Mystic Arts: The Brothers Hood**

I idolized my oldest brother Ron and whenever he was around, I begged him to let me hang out with him. He was always smiling, with his characteristic “cat that ate the canary grin” under his blonde wavy hair. I could be persistent, and I succeeded in talking my way into rides in his blue Volkswagen bus. Ron would stick a Paul Butterfield Blues Band eight-track into the tape player in the dash, and I was in seventh heaven. I would tag along, following him to places like the Mystic Arts World, a metaphysical bookstore, hippie boutique and head shop on Pacific Coast Highway in Laguna Beach. It was located across from a Taco Bell. It wasn’t that imposing a place, but it was the epicenter of the psychedelic world and one of the first head shops in existence.

Mystic Arts World was where the Brotherhood of Eternal Love dropped acid and smoked pot while the FBI sat across the street, monitoring their every move. They were most often referred to as simply “The Brotherhood,” and they had an unwritten rule that everyone called everyone else “Brother.” They welcomed me in as one of their own. It was all a strange trip, but one I definitely wanted to take. I WAS their “little brother.”

The Brotherhood of Eternal Love was started in 1967 by a group of guys who all attended Fremont Junior High in Anaheim. It began as a car club that they called the “Street Sweeper’s.” They truly believed they had found a “magic bullet” in the drug LSD, and they decided to shoulder the mission of turning the entire world on to the wonders of acid. At first, they were committed to a non-materialistic lifestyle; striving to achieve eternal peace and love through communal living. It was truly “all for one and one for all.” The men of the Brotherhood appeared to be men of honor and respect, and I became fascinated by them and their radical ways; and why not? They were not part of the establishment. What had the establishment ever done for me? School was part of the establishment, and school had done nothing for me except make me miserable.

A large part of the Brotherhood’s lifestyle was involved with drug usage. Because of my devotion to the principles of that group, I became firmly convinced that there was absolutely nothing wrong with using the drugs

that the Brotherhood used. After all, pot came from nature and nature meant God and in my eyes God was always a good thing!

The only things the drugs seemed to do was make a person more peaceful and loving, and what could possibly be wrong with that? Back then, I never saw anybody get hurt from smoking pot or dropping acid. The movement was so new that no one had any idea of the far-reaching side effects of acid that would show up decades later.

It is ironic that the Brotherhood, which was founded on the principles of peace and love, became the biggest hash distributors in the world during the 1960's and 70's. I must emphasize that during the period I'm discussing, nobody got totally crazy with drugs or got out of control. After all, the people we knew who were using the drugs all believed in the ideals of the Brotherhood of Eternal Love.

Things changed drastically, however, when the money involved became so big. People got greedy and bad drugs came into the picture; like coke, PCP and other synthetic drugs. In the beginning, it was about love; learning to love ourselves and love each other. The Brotherhood thought they could change the world, but in the final analysis, drugs and greed changed them. Well, at least most of them.

I clearly remember three Brotherhood friends of Ron's: Pat Ranney, Jimmy and Buckwheat, who were all really into LSD and were true believers of the power of enlightenment it possessed. They were good men who would never hurt a soul; and there were other good people in the Brotherhood. Back in the late 1960's, I would have to say that the majority of the Brotherhood truly believed in what they were doing.

As gentle a man as Pat Ranney was he still got in trouble with the law, and it was strictly because of the type of person he was. He wore his hair long, and he acted different.

He was taken by the FBI, and they gave him shock treatments. They really messed him up. They destroyed his mind and soul because of his beliefs; and they turned him into a vegetable. I was so devastated when I heard that from my brother, and that made me even more anti-establishment.

I realized then that there was a war going on between the establishment and the true believers. The true believers came to be called "hippies," but in the beginning, the establishment called them "communists," "subversives," "deviants" or "perverts." There was no question that the establishment was out to fry us just because we were so different from them. The peace and love people weren't going to fight back, so they were bullied. By the time I was twelve, I didn't trust the government one bit.

That was the same year I first tried hash in the back of my oldest brother's blue Volkswagen bus. Ron was driving with a six-foot-two, skinny black friend of his named "Spade Johnny" in the front passenger seat. Ron had met him in broadcasting school.

Johnny is now a very wealthy real estate broker in Northern California. Johnny was a big player with Ron in the hash business, but he was one of the few smart ones who quit while the quitting was good and went straight.

On the day of my first experience with hash, Spade Johnny pulled out a silver hash pipe and after he lit it up, my brother took a hit and then passed it back to me. "Here Scotty, have a toke," he said. I pictured myself as being the coolest kid in Placentia Elementary School as I inhaled that rich, thick smoke. What I vaguely remember happening next was that I was dropped off at home, and then I wandered through the backyard, jumped the fence, and walked down along the Santa Ana River bed, enjoying every minute of the trek.

Ron then began to show me that he trusted me by giving me small quantities of pot to hold for him. Looking back on it now, I can see how this was part of his grooming process for me.

One afternoon while my parents were both out of the house, Ron came over with Spade Johnny. They were both high, and they jammed on Ron's organ in our Japanese style living room. My parents had bought Ron the organ when he was ten and we were in Ohio. He had a lot of raw musical talent, and he patterned himself after Jimmy Smith. My oldest brother later bought himself a Hammond B-3 with a Lesley amp. After they jammed for a while, Ron asked me: "Do you still have that bag I gave you?"

I had placed the bag in a tin can and buried the can on the side of the house where I would smoke the Kool cigarettes I stole from my father's pocket. I went out and dug the can up. I brought it into the house, opened it and showed Ron and Spade Johnny that I still had the stash they had placed in my care. They said: "All right!! Good one, Scotty!" Their acknowledgement that I could be trusted lifted my spirits and made me feel like I was accepted, and that felt pretty cool. Ron rolled me a joint of that pot, which I smoked with him. He also left me a couple of joints, and I smoked them by myself over the course of the next few days down in the riverbed.

A week later, Ron decided to again include me on something super cool: A trip south of the border. "I'm going down to Mexico tomorrow," he said, with that broad grin painted on his face. "I can take you, but only if you tell Mom we're going to Disneyland." He threw three free passes down on the

table, which he had acquired from working at the Golden Horseshoe Review. "Show those to her," he added. "We'll bring Mark, also." My mom was happy that Ron would be taking us to Disneyland because she and my dad had made plans to attend a wedding that day and it helped take a burden off her shoulders as to what to do with me and Mark.

So the following Saturday morning Ron showed up, I was all smiles. He loaded the two of us into his blue VW van and we set off down the coast highway, headed south to towards the Mexican border. Mark still thought we were going to Disneyland, although not for long. We stopped in La Jolla, where Ron got out and had a quick conversation with one of his Brotherhood friends named Buckwheat. He had long blonde hair down below his shoulders and a beard down to his chest. His pregnant, barefoot hippie wife was standing next to him. He also had a VW van that sported a few surf boards on top. After Buckwheat gave Ron a good Brotherhood hug and handed him a huge roll of bills, we were back on our way down South.

I had never been out of the country before that day, and as we crossed over into Tijuana, Mark in the back seat, me in front, I stared out the windows at the rundown and dusty streets, soaking in the sights, passing seedy bars and funky shops selling all sorts of traditional Mexican handicrafts. Ron drove through the town and down the coast highway for what seemed forever. It must have been a hundred miles or more before he stopped to make a few calls at a roadside shop. He bought us a huge bundle of bottle rockets from a fireworks stand, and then got back in and traveled a little further. Then he pulled off the highway onto a bumpy, dusty, rocky road, until we reached the windy edge of a cliff rising forty or fifty feet over the blue Pacific Ocean with it's waves pounding on it's white sandy shore line below.

Ron jumped out of the driver's seat and came around to the side of the van and slid open the door. "I have to get going for a little while," Ron said as he pulled a foldable old army cot from the back of the van to give me. He then handed me the bottle rockets, there must have been about 200 or more, he handed me a box of blue tip matches, and a gold colored crystal bottle, gave me that smile of his, slammed the sliding door, jumped into the drivers' seat then took off back up the dusty dirt road leaving us in the dust without anything to eat or drink.

For the next few hours Mark and I sat on the cliff and shot off the bottle rockets, having a ball. When the fireworks ran out, we lit the rest of the matches and watched them completely burn right down to the very last one. After a few more hours, the sun began to set and I started to get

worried” Where was my brother?” A few hours had turned into more like five and the entire time we saw only one fisherman down on the beach from the cliff. That’s when Mark finally said, with a sad look on his face “I thought we were going to Disneyland.”

Long after darkness set in, my younger brother and I were sharing the cot and starting to freeze from the strong off-shore winds, we were freezing and Ron hadn’t left us any blankets, not even a few sweaters but then I guess he wasn’t planning to be away so long. Suddenly way off in the distance, I could see a set of headlights bouncing through the dust coming down the road. Ron pulled up with a big shit-eating grin and before we could even ask for water, he said: “Hurry up, we’re late.” We threw the cot in the back with the bottle and Ron turned the van around. Several hours after dropping us off, we were on our way back towards the border.

On Saturday nights, the line going back through customs into the United States is always long, as I would learn, and while we waited for close to two hours in line, Ron loaded up on the typical tourist paraphernalia from the vendors that hawked goods at the side of the road near the boarder. First, he bought a two-foot-tall brown plaster crucifix, complete with Jesus, which I held in my lap, and sombreros for all of us. Then he purchased a Mexican serape as well as a velvet painting of an ocean scene for Mark to hold; all diversions for the eyes of the customs agents.

“Just act cool,” Ron said as we reached the checkpoint. The customs agent took his ID, looked at me and Mark with our souvenirs, sombreros on our heads and smiles on our faces and without a second glance, waved us right through.

As we pulled out onto the highway into San Diego, Ron let out a scream of triumph: “WAHOOO! WE DID IT!” Back on U.S. soil with eighty kilos of “puntos rojas,” or “red buds,” packed into a false bottom of the VW bus, we were headed home with a \$25,000 marijuana payload; and I felt the rush of pulling off my first scam. I completely understood Ron’s elation. It was as if he was rubbing in the dirt the face of that foreman who had made him feel like nothing. Even though Ron and I were legally blind, there was no need for us to grovel. Mom and Dad had it all wrong, and Ron had it all right. I placed my fate in my oldest brother’s hands.

## Sunshine of Your Love

Despite my willingness to follow Ron wherever he led, I wasn't allowed to join my brother when he moved to Marin County in Northern California. He assured Mom and Dad that he could afford to do it because he had gone into the business of selling health foods, but in truth, he was making a lot of money selling pot and hash. The funny part of it was that he eventually would put some of his profits into a business he ran with his friend Gary called "Everybody's Natural Foods" in the town of Fairfax, California. The business occupied a Victorian house, and Ron brought in an older man who was an award-winning baker from Denmark to produce bread, baked goods and confections. Soon after that, Ron and Gary opened "Everybody's Natural Foods Bakery" just down the road in San Anselmo. Needless to say, Ron's story rang true with our parents, and they seemed to be happy about his success.

I was ready to go, but I realized they would stop me; after all I was only thirteen years old at the time. Having one of their children go off on their own was hard enough for my parents, and I don't believe they could have handled two of their sons leaving at the same time. Besides, it was simply out of the question. I watched as Ron packed up his belongings, stuffing a large bag full of cash from under his bed into the bottom of a duffle bag. Then, with the family waving goodbye from the front lawn, he moved out on his own. My father said very little that bright Saturday morning. I found my mother staring aimlessly from the kitchen out into the backyard. She was crying.

"Before you know it, you'll be leaving, too," she said to me, trying to smile. Her words proved prophetic.

Like all middle school kids, my hormones were raging and I became interested in the opposite sex. Dad never discussed sex with me, though, and my mom never mentioned anything about it either. One time, I overheard my mother angrily say to my father: "You don't have the guts to talk to your sons about the facts of life!" In our house, sex was something that just wasn't discussed.

Meanwhile, I was trying to get my hands up the skirts and down the pants of just about every good-looking girl in the neighborhood. My very first regular lay as a kid living in Northridge, California was a classmate of mine from Chatsworth High. She was the daughter of one of the stars of the "Little Rascals" TV show. I guess you could say I was also a Little Rascal!

Not that I spent all my time chasing girls. Most afternoons, after class let out from middle school, I hung out at my buddy Alden's house. Alden and I were the two coolest guys in school; too hip for our britches and always chasing the same babes. I prided myself on being the best dancer at

Kraemer. I won nearly all the dance contests at school dances, with my hot moves to James Brown songs, such as “I Feel Good.” It was my way of swooning the girls. I could do the splits, and I was hot.

Alden’s parents were very close to him. His mother was a high school principal and his dad was a professor of educational administration at Fullerton State. His mom and dad must have told him it was alright for us to smoke pot in his upstairs room because he was always so casual about it. I figured they must have allowed us to do it because their biggest concern was preventing us from getting busted.

Alden and I also invited other friends named Steve and Bobby Willoughby, who had severe hearing issues, to join us in the upstairs room. The four of us smoked pot out of a gold-colored crystal bottle we had fashioned into a water pipe. Alden had the bunk beds to stretch out on and black lights that illuminated classic posters of Jimi Hendrix and The Beatles. Even more important, he had liberal parents who seemingly didn’t mind us smoking under their roof.

With the vinyl spinning on the record player, we would talk for hours about anything and everything important: Life, girls and politics. Vietnam was still dragging on with no end in sight. Despite my brother Michael’s insane willingness to volunteer, my friends and I joined the call for an end to war. We were outspoken and adamant, all from the safety of Alden’s room. We were “weekend hippies.”

Whenever we needed a ride anywhere those days, there was always Bobby. I recall Mrs. Willoughby being far from sure we were the best of influences, although I managed to convince her he wouldn’t get into any trouble. Although already in high school and older than us, Bobby was partially deaf and dumb. He had a language all his own, and although definitely not part of the “in” crowd, he made us laugh with classic lines like “Les go et sum putty,” after we got high in his sky blue Chevy hot rod. Bobby would crank the music loud enough to feel the vibrations on the steering wheel and we would cruise through town, burning rubber around the corners, forever on the prowl for more excitement. Naturally, it wasn’t long before Mrs. Willoughby regretted listening to me.

I was fourteen when the four of us took a road trip and ended up out in the woods, where we all dropped a few hits of Orange Sunshine that Ron had given me. My brother often hooked me up when he came home to visit from Marin County, but if he wasn’t around or feeling especially generous, it was easy enough to get anything those days. Everyone seemed to be getting high, especially in high school.

Wandering aimlessly through the forest on acid, my friends and I were tripping through a scene straight out of “Alice in Wonderland,” complete with Cheshire cats and every color of the rainbow cascading down from a starlit sky; philatelic paisleys rolling off every living thing. We’d trip on hallucinations and share what we were tripping on while playing some Hendrix and Cream on Alden’s eight track portable tape machine.

“Sunshine of Your Love” was one of my favorite songs then and was perfect for the occasion, being that we were all high on Orange Sunshine! Incidentally, that song was sung by Jack Bruce, a man who I’d eventually meet up with in Mill Valley, California ten years later at my favorite watering hole, “The Sweet Water Saloon.” I was introduced to him by Nicky Hopkins, my dear departed friend and unsung hero and piano player for the Rolling Stones.

The trip went bad later the same night when I woke up in the back seat of the Chevy with a flashlight beam in my face. As soon as Bobby tried to talk his way out of the jam, the cops lined us all up on the side of the road and opened up the trunk. They went through my tweed jacket to find three grams of hash concealed in a film container; all they needed to arrest me on possession charges. I came down from my high in an Orange County jail cell as the sun rose through the single barred window.

The following morning, John Handy, my dad’s business partner, came and bailed me out. Dad sent him because he had once been a cop and thought he might be able to talk some sense into me.

“We’ll go to court and we’ll get you off, but we don’t want to see you doing this again,” Handy told me as he pulled up in front of my house. “We” always included my father, but it seemed like I only heard “we” from anyone but Dad.

I walked inside and Dad gave me a hard stare from his Lay-Z-Boy, shaking his head with disappointment, while my mother, looking worried sick, made me breakfast. I’m not sure my parents could have said anything that day to knock me from the path I was set on taking. I ate my eggs, drank my milk, went back up to my room and realized only that I had better lay low for a few days before going out to do it all again.

When I showed up in front of the judge for sentencing, he looked down at my file, scratched his head and asked: “You’re related to Adlai Stevenson?”

“Yes, sir,” I replied.

**“He’s a great man,” the judge went on, just before letting me walk back out with a year’s probation.**

### **With Flowers in Our Hair**

**Any thoughts of remorse I had over that first run-in with the law were further muted when I arrived at high school. Sitting out on the lawn with my mates, I realized my brief visit to jail, besides having no real ramifications, meant instant popularity. “Probation,” I announced, “that’s no big thing.” But I wasn’t about to put up with having to pay monthly visits to some frickin’ probation officer telling me what to do and how to do it; no way.**

**By now, my oldest brother was doing extremely well for himself, but not through any reportable income. He jammed with a band during the day and hung out at various clubs with his Brotherhood friends in San Francisco at night. Yet he still carried around a tremendous amount of cash while cruising along in a beautiful classic mint condition 1959 Bentley. I could tell that Ron was not really committed to the Brotherhood’s non-materialistic lifestyle. He often reminded me not to mention the Bentley to any of his Brotherhood friends. He would say: “I don’t want them to know that I’m driving a Bentley.” As time went by, I realized that Ron was involved with the Brotherhood and the drug trade for only one reason: The money.**

**He had also mentioned only in passing that he was traveling back and forth to Morocco and “doing some business” with B.J., a guy I had previously met. B.J.’s background, amongst his more impressive achievements, included a flight from the law that started when cops in San Francisco tried to pull him over. With two large drums filled with PCP in the back of his Triumph, he decided to floor the gas pedal, screaming through the streets until his tires blew out, even though, as he told me later: “God came out of the dashboard to give me directions.” The cops apparently roughed B.J. up pretty bad when he resisted arrest. They took him to a hospital ward where a day later with the help of his mother, he snuck out from under their noses while being taken for medical treatment. B.J. didn’t stop running until he reached Spain with his wife Erica.**

**Hearing about all these wild experiences and knowing how well my oldest brother was doing made me feel trapped. I desperately needed to bust out, but I knew I couldn’t do it alone. I needed help to escape from the prison of stifling conformity. Help came from an unexpected source.**

After I returned to school, Mom took me to the principal's office to meet with him. Mom told him that she was trying to figure out where I was going with my education. We went into the principal's office and sat down. I started expressing my feelings about peace and love. The principal said to me: "Scott, we have a lot of students here and there's a girl in this school who thinks very much like you. Her name is Bonnie. You should meet with Bonnie."

As soon as I left the meeting with my mom and the principal, I made it a point to find Bonnie. I found her sitting on the lawn. I introduced myself and we hit it off right away. She was a cute little hippie the same age as I. I could tell that we had a lot in common because we were the two true hippies of Chatsworth High. I had some joints on me and I offered her one. We sat there right on the school grounds and smoked. As I sat with her, I was so grateful for that meeting in the principal's office because he had brought Bonnie and I together. I thought: "Maybe I should thank the principal for what he did, but then again, he wouldn't know what I was talking about." It is ironic that Mom had put her trust in the principal's ability to help me solve my problems, and all he did was make things worse. In looking back, the principal's actions were just another example of how Chatsworth High School's liberalized policies had failed. They turned out to be a gateway to even more fast times and out of control behavior by the students.

It wasn't long before another girl and an older guy showed up. Bonnie, me and the other girl were all sophomores, while the older guy was a senior. Bonnie and I shared our joints with them and after awhile, I said: "Hey, let's just take off and go to San Francisco." The other three all said "Yeah!" with great enthusiasm. It was a done deal and we left that very day. It was a classic case of "Tune in, turn on and drop out."

The older guy had an old station wagon with bald tires that couldn't have been worth more than \$200. All four of us piled into that wagon and we drove back to my house. When I walked in, no one was there. My mom's purse was sitting on a table, but she must have been in the backyard or at a neighbor's house. She might have been sleeping, but I wasn't about to look for her. I took seventeen dollars out of her purse, which was all the cash she had. I then quickly wrote a note which read: "Going on vacation early this year. I'm taking off for a little while. I love you." I signed the note "Scottie."

I went back out to the older guy's car, got in with my newfound friends and we took off for Northern California. The two girls and the older guy didn't even bother to stop at their places to pick up anything. He already had a

**couple of sleeping bags in his station wagon, and we figured that was about all we needed. We hit the road with little in the way of money, equipment or possessions; not even any change of clothes. We felt totally free and believed that all issues about how we would make it through the world would take care of themselves, all in due course.**

**We got on Highway 101 and headed for San Francisco. We drove the whole night through. Just as we were coming into San Francisco, we were pulled over by a cop. When I saw the cop, I thought: “Oh no, we’re finished!” We all sat there trembling from fear that we were busted. Our hearts were pounding. We all thought our parents had gone to the police and had an alert put out. We were really worried until he said to the older kid: “Excuse me, sir, but you have a back light out. You should get it fixed right away.” He didn’t even give him a citation. When the cop left the scene, I thought: “The gods are with us.”**

**After several hours of driving in that clunker, we arrived in the middle of the night at Woodacre, a small suburb in Marin County, and we slept in our sleeping bags in a spot in the woods. The following morning, we set out to find my brother’s house. We found the address and went to the door.**

**Much to our surprise, a completely naked man answered the door and introduced himself as Krishna Das. I later found out he was a yogi who had been living at Ron and his girlfriend Susie’s house. Ron explained: “He likes to do yoga out in the cold, in the nude.”**

**I accepted it and made nothing of it. I thought: “It’s just part of being a hippie!” Krishna Das told us: “Ron is in the city and isn’t expected back until a few days or more. I don’t know where he’s hanging, but you can find him around North Beach.” So we all piled in the junker and headed back towards San Francisco and found our way to North Beach. The four of us, all teenage runaways, were having the time of our lives hanging out in San Francisco. We felt the magic of being free.**

**Soon enough, as if Ron knew I was coming, I spotted my oldest brother walking down Broadway in his long suede overcoat. In some psychic way, he had just arrived on the scene and was headed right for me. He wasn’t at all surprised to see me.**

**Ron separated me from my three companions. When I asked him about them, all he said was: “I can’t handle this shit.” He knew that if he separated me from Bonnie, he could take control of me. He took me to his friends’ house. My traveling companions and I parted company. The last I saw of them, they were just hanging around in San Francisco.**

**“Why don’t you go to Hawaii,” Ron soon suggested, even offering me one hundred fifty bucks out of his wallet if I left that afternoon. Despite discouraging my friends, he was amazingly eager to help me out. “I know some Brotherhood people over there you can stay with. I’ll also buy you a plane ticket.” A one-way ticket to Maui, Hawaii from California cost \$150 back then.**

**Ron wrote out two addresses on a small sheet of paper, stuffed four ounces of hash and twenty-five hits of Purple Owsley LSD into my silver Bundy flute case and drove me to the airport in the Bentley. “I’ll be over there in a few weeks,” he said, flashing that grin of his. “Don’t worry about Mom and Dad, I’ll tell them you’re with me.” Well, those weeks turned into months and almost a year; but that was so typical of Ron at the time and it really didn’t matter. I was living the life and loving every minute of it!**

### **Here Today, Gone to Maui**

**I flew into Honolulu and then took a connecting flight to Maui. Once I landed in Maui, I stepped out into the warm tropical breeze with what little belongings I had under one arm. I landed with \$150 in my pocket, plus the four ounces of hash and the LSD. My flute case made it easy to transport the stash. If you lifted part of the case, there was a perfect false bottom with ample room for the goodies. It was a foolproof plan because, back then, there were no such things as x-raying luggage or TSA security. Nobody was looking through your shit.**

**Ron had advised me to hitchhike after I left the airport. Back in those days, if you stood along the road in Maui, hippies would pick you up all day and night. I had no problem catching a ride to Lahaina.**

**I went to one of the addresses Ron had written down for me. It turned out to be a little old funky house in Lahaina, just off Front Street on the boardwalk. It was typical of the houses in that area. It was occupied by a guy named Tom and a black coral diver named Steve. I walked up the entrance, knocked on the screen door and a blonde-haired guy answered. I introduced myself, saying: “Hi, I’m Ron Stevenson’s brother. My brother said it was cool for me to crash here.”**

**Steve was the blonde-haired guy and he let me in, but he didn’t look too happy about my brother’s offering his place for me to stay. He said: “That’ll be cool... for a few nights.” My staying there got real old in a short**

time, so I remained for a few days, and then it was time to move on. I headed for the second address, which was in Kihei, on the other side of the island, toward Makena Beach.

Bill and Eleanor lived at that address, and they were really cool. They were good people, and they had two small children; cute blonde-haired hippie babies. Right after arriving, I opened up the flute case, popped open the bottom and gave them an ounce of the Afghani Primo hash that I had. An ounce of Afghani Primo back then retailed for \$55 to \$65. The couple threw me what they warmly termed “an Aloha welcoming party;” although it was obvious that they had been partying for days and most likely wouldn’t stop partying until long after I left. Without having found time to eat on the day I traveled to their place, I went straight for the potluck they had laid out. It was piled high with mostly local vegetarian dishes, with the exception of some fresh turtle that Bill had recently caught and a few sweets that I easily recognized. After practically inhaling the food, I polished off a few of the delicious brownies that Eleanor had baked up.

“What happened to all those brownies?” Bill asked me as I stuffed the last one from the plate into my mouth.

“They were good,” I said with a big smile on my face. I admitted that I had eaten four of them.

“They should have been,” he laughed, adding that the secret recipe included the whole ounce of the hash I had given them.

From the ingestion of all the hash, I was “peaking” for three days, fading in and out of a gray haze. I was barely able to recall hitching another ride; this time out to the middle of nowhere with a car full of hippies. We traveled down a road full of powdery dust and eventually ended up at a long strip of perfect white sand bordered by the Pacific on one side and a rolling lush kiawe tree forest on the other. I was at Makena Beach.

With only a single house in sight at the far end of the beach, the residents had constructed shanties everywhere made out of sticks and palm tree leaves. They were rustic and funky, and it looked like something right out of the Leonardo Di Caprio movie “The Beach.” I took a stroll over a set of boulders and a hill and arrived at Little Beach, where families, including children and parents, body surfed naked with the dolphins in the rolling waves.

As luck would have it, I had arrived at the ideal time; the day when everyone received their food stamps. That night a massive feast was held, complete with bonfires and music. I played my flute to the drumming of

Hashish Harry and a symphony of others as the sun set over the water, bathing the darkening sky in a perfect mix of orange and red.

Thus began a cycle of staying at Makena Beach, occasionally making it back to Bill and Eleanor's, and then traveling on to Banana Patch. Banana Patch was in Haiku, and like Makena Beach, the commune I found there was a genuine paradise for a fifteen-year-old boy. Beautiful young women sauntered around with long flowered dresses flowing in the wind and skinny-dipped in the natural pools beneath waterfalls while the men welcomed me with true communal spirit. Everywhere people were meditating, practicing yoga and getting high. I carried as little as possible as I moved from place to place, sleeping on a grass mat under the stars with my flute case for a pillow.

There wasn't much of a law enforcement presence. I remember smoking pot on the boardwalk in Lahaina and a policeman coming by. All he said was: "Put da pakalolo away, braddah!" "Pakalolo" was the Hawaiian term for pot (it literally translates to "crazy smoke"). Keep in mind this was at the very same time when there were big crackdowns on pot smoking in California. Hawaii was one of our newest states, and back in the late 1960's it was very much like Asia in that it was so laid back and easy going.

Few rules and regulations were enforced. There were a lot of draft dodgers hanging out there. I even witnessed illegal cock fights while I was in Hawaii. Through it all, there wasn't one single time that I was asked for proof that I was over eighteen.

Ron had taken the precaution of supplying me with a phony baptismal certificate and a phony draft card which stated my age was nineteen. But I never had to show any form of ID to anyone during the time I was in Hawaii. That's why the Brotherhood went there. It was paradise for them, and for me.

People were just beginning to grow "Maui Wowie" pot in quantity when I got over there. They were growing their pot on plots they had staked out in the jungles. They would dig far into the jungle and were willing to sit there for six months, waiting for the time to harvest their plants. They would basically camp in the woods and watch their plants grow. The growers worked in teams and would trade off places. One guy would be relieved by another guy so he could come out of the jungle for a month. In the early Maui days, the police weren't enforcing many laws, but within a few years, there was a crackdown.

When I first arrived in Maui in 1969, you never heard of any big drug busts, probably because law enforcement was ill prepared to carry them out. The

cops on Maui were a joke. The police station was just an old, run down building in Lahaina. There was no one who could stop any of the pot growing in the jungle and the only thing growers had to fear was the locals ripping them off. It wasn't until around 1972 that the drug raids started and helicopters were used for surveillance.

I was having a great time. Before I knew it, the days had stretched into weeks. Initially, I was making ends meet by selling the hash that Ron had given me. To make a few bucks with perks, including the use of a bathroom and a shower, I agreed to serve organic carrot juice and smoothies at Charlie's Juice Stand, a five-by-ten-foot shack named for the owner's dog and painted with a psychedelic likeness of a Great Dane.

The juice stand was owned by a guy named Jim. He was a cool guy. He gave me the job of making avocado sandwiches, smoothies and serving carrot juice. He didn't pay me anything; all I received was free sandwiches and juice. I slept out in front of the juice stand on a cot. If it rained, I got underneath the thatched roof awning. To a fifteen-year-old, this was paradise. I had all the hash and all the pot I wanted to smoke. When not working at the stand, I would sit on the boardwalk and go surfing, consume smoothies and hustle high school girls there on trips given to them by their parents as graduation presents. I often shacked up with them in their hotel rooms at the Pioneer Inn. I was living as an adult, but with no responsibilities, and it was the greatest time of my life.

I will never forget one beautiful blonde haired, blue-eyed girl from California. She was special, and I fell in love with her. We hung out for about a week until one day she got wooed away by a guy who I had met on the boardwalk by the name of Joe South.

I made the mistake of introducing my hot little California girl to Joe; because he sweet-talked her right out from under me. Joe South was about fifteen years my senior, and I later found out that he had played guitar with a range of artists, including Bob Dylan (on his album "Blonde on Blonde") and Aretha Franklin. In addition, Billy Joe Royal recorded several of Joe's songs in the 1960's, including "Down in the Boondocks" and "I Knew You When." Elvis Presley performed Joe's song "Walk a Mile in My Shoes" in concert. Joe South is probably best known for his Top Ten hit "The Games People Play," which won a Grammy.

He was big competition and played the game very well. He took that special girl away from me. I learned a lesson about how not to be so trusting. I felt that he ripped me off, and I was really hurt. For the first time, a woman had broken my heart. Unfortunately, it wouldn't be the last.

## Rainbow Bridge

I still recall the very first time I ever saw Jimi Hendrix. It was at the Newport Pop Festival at Devonshire Downs in Northridge, California, not more than two miles from my house. It was June 20, 1969; just before I ran away from home.

I will never forget that concert. It was a huge three-day event and the first of its kind to be held in Los Angeles. I was behind the fence because I couldn't afford the ticket price, since my parents wouldn't give me the seven-dollar entrance fee required to get in. So I found myself outside the fence, just behind the stage with all the Hell's Angels and L.A. street racers who were providing security for the promoters.

The cops were out in force with their Billy clubs and riot gear. As soon as Jimi started playing, they all lined up and started coming at us in their attack formation, pushing us like animals. We all ran in separate directions, and rocks and bottles went flying through the air in the middle of the intersection of Devonshire Boulevard and Zelzah.

Hendrix sounded just terrible, and it was later reported that someone had spiked his drink with acid. He returned to the stage on Sunday, however, and rocked the house with a set he did with the great drummer Buddy Miles. I never dreamed that not more than a year later, I'd be meeting Hendrix up close and personal in Maui, Hawaii.

The adventure began when Barry de Prendergast showed up one day at the juice stand. He was a strange looking hippie with bushy dark hair and wearing a Hopi Indian shirt. He was totally vegan and was wearing cotton shoes with soles made from rope. He spoke with a slight English accent, but I later found out he was originally from Ireland.

After ordering a fruit smoothie, he introduced himself. He told me he was in town to film a movie for Warner Brothers called "Rainbow Bridge." He said: "If you want a job, I can get you a job working in the kitchen with a few other people who will be preparing all-organic vegetarian food for the cast and crew. I've rented the only mansion on the island, and that's where you'll be living."

It sounded good to me. With that, I hung up my apron and said goodbye to Charlie's Juice Stand.

The “mansion” turned out to be Seabury Hall, which was actually a high-dollar private girls’ school. Barry had rented it for the summer to do a feature-length motion picture. The owners had no idea of what they had signed up for.

Seabury Hall was in Makawao, on the side of Haleakala Crater. It was like living in a four-star hotel. The property was located on a few hundred acres and included an Olympic-sized outdoor swimming pool. It had horses, with beautiful green pastures where you could ride them, and million-dollar views.

Since the Baldwin family who founded the school had come to Hawaii to be missionaries, Seabury Hall had a chapel. While Barry and his motley crew occupied the premises, the chapel was used for viewing the daily rushes of the film. All of the classic antique furniture in the mansion was piled into one room in order to keep it out of the way of what Barry and Chuck Wein had in mind.

Chuck Wein was the director. His big claim to fame was having been part of Andy Warhol’s “Factory Crew” in New York, along with Edie Sedgwick and a bunch of other misfits. Chuck had been Andy’s lover for 12 years prior to doing Rainbow Bridge.

Chuck and Barry decided to convert the spacious living room of the mansion into the “ultimate hippie salon.” The room had piles of huge pillows. A big low-lying round table was placed in the center of the pillows. The table was adorned with incense and candles. It was truly the ultimate hippie pad. After a few days of being at Seabury Hall, I decided to make that pile of pillows my bed every night.

Rainbow Bridge would eventually go down in movie history as a cult classic. It was intended, as Barry explained, to be “a high energy experiment in color, light and sound.” Completely unscripted, the cast of characters included people brought from around the world who were all interested in various forms of the occult. The grand finale would be a Jimi Hendrix concert where an audience of some 400 people was partitioned into sections determined by their various astrological signs, hence allowing Jimi to focus his energy toward the various astrological groups. Well, that was what the rumor was anyway.

Quite frankly, I think Hendrix thought Chuck Wein, Barry de Prendergast and all of their cast and crew were nothing but a bunch of Hollywood idiots. Chuck seriously claimed he was some sort of wizard and he started pushing his wizard rubbish, which didn’t go over very big with Jimi.

In addition to the motion picture production, Barry de Prendergast had an agenda for me. I was a hot little surfer boy, and I didn't realize Barry was gay until it was too late. He didn't come off as gay; he didn't talk or act in an effeminate way. He didn't use any sweet talk on men, and he didn't lisp. He showed none of the stereotypical behavior patterns of gay men.

He eventually succeeded in screwing me, but not in a sexual way. He ripped me off in a pot deal some years later, but his efforts at having sex with me met with failure. He would often say to me: "You're gay; you just don't know it yet! One day you're gonna discover that you're gay." But that day never came, and it was all just his way of trying to convince me to try being gay. I can't imagine "trying" to be gay; I just don't see how that would work. Besides, I just liked women too much.

Shortly after arriving at Seabury Hall, I was given the run of the place and over the course of a few weeks, the participants arrived, including a group of Peyote Indians, a 75-year-old clairvoyant from South America named "Clara Clairvoyant" and Albert Einstein's nephew, Dr. Bronners. Clara Clairvoyant sat with me every night at dinner so that I could help serve her. My personal take on Dr. Bronners was he was totally insane. He used to catch me in the office in the back of the kitchen and start practicing his ecology speeches on me, none of which I could understand. When Hendrix himself finally joined us, he spent most of the time in a room upstairs above the living room with a slew of gorgeous women and Pat Hartley, a member of the cast who was a black chick from New York.

Whatever needed to be done I did; cooking, giving rides to the cast and crew and helping build sets. In typical communal fashion, every night forty to sixty people ate together at a long group of tables in the huge dining room. All the food was vegetarian and it was all part of the "Rainbow Bridge Light and Color Experiment."

A Brotherhood guy named Paul showed up and started passing out some really powerful acid that he called "White Lightning." He claimed it was THE miracle batch, and everyone was tripping out on it. One night, about ten guys from the Brotherhood showed up with a huge Afghani wedding hooka, and they filled it with half a kilo of Afghan primo hash. It took about twenty minutes just to get the thing lit and when it got going, it literally filled the mansion's living room with smoke. Hendrix was involved in a jam session at the time and didn't really know what to make of it. All these hippies were hacking away and coughing their heads off all over the place because of the hash smoke that filled their lungs to the hilt. It must have felt like drowning in a vat of deliciously decadent chocolate.

Despite this distraction, Jimi just continued to jam in the living room with the other two members of his trio: Mitch Mitchell and Billy Cox. The following morning, I remember picking up Jimi's guitar and trying to play it, but because I am right handed it was a bit awkward. It was still nice to be able to do it. I thought at the time: "Years from now, I can say that I had actually played Jimi Hendrix' guitar. Not many people can make that claim!" I didn't realize how prophetic that statement would be. Many years later, high tech billionaire Paul Allen paid \$740,000 for that very same guitar to add to his private collection.

Occasionally, Jimi would come downstairs and ask me to pick up some hamburgers for him at the McDonald's in Wailuku. "Thanks, little brother," he'd always say. If anyone could get away with eating meat on the vegetarian set of Rainbow Bridge, it was him. I think he must have thought: "What a bunch of rubbish!"

The one day I actually spent some time with Jimi was when Leslie Potts invited me along to smoke some hash. Leslie was a renowned Maui surfer who I knew way before Rainbow Bridge. In fact, my brother Ron had given Leslie the startup capital for a surf board company that was one of the first such businesses on the island.

There were only the three of us, Jimi, Leslie and myself. Jimi talked about buying some land in Maui to build a communal center focusing on the arts. He wanted to construct pyramids and domes, all as sort of an ongoing Rainbow Bridge concept. Sadly enough, those dreams of the greatest guitar player of all time were cut short when he passed away on September 18, 1970.

As for me, while my adventures in Hawaii kept me from looking back, my parents were desperately trying to find their third son. They became all the more troubled when, as I promised in my brief note, "a little while" stretched into nine months. Ron had, as promised, told them I was staying with him, but then he eventually admitted that I had moved on to live in Hawaii.

When I finally called, my mother screamed out to my father: "IT'S SCOTTY!" before begging me to come home. "Your probation officer isn't too pleased," Mom said. Then she added: "But your father can pull a few strings." I never saw the probation officer and once again, Dad took care of everything. The funny thing was he didn't say a single word to me when I returned. I guess he wasn't very good at that sort of thing; so he just acted as if it had never happened.

## Keeping It in the Family

Back in Southern California, I spent only a few weeks with my parents before moving in with Ron in Marin County. When he freely mentioned that I had obviously made “a lot of good connections in Hawaii,” it dawned on me why he had been so eager to see me forge out on my own. He didn’t waste any time. He handed me a camera case with five pounds of Moroccan Blonde hash packed into a false bottom underneath the camera, produced another ticket to Maui and asked if I thought I could “unload some product” with some of my friends. Ron accompanied me on that trip. The money we cleared from selling the hash came to about \$7,000. It basically financed a nice vacation for Ron and me.

At that point I was still willing to let him hold my fate in his hands. I saw Ron with the cash, the cars and the women. I knew from the moment I first crossed the border at the age of twelve exactly what my brother had going. I was more than ready to follow wherever he led. Within months, the last person on earth I ever imagined also agreed to join along and follow Ron’s lead.

By 1970, my father’s relationship with his partners in the land development company had deteriorated into open hostility. At one point, they even tried to murder him. It all started when his partners became embroiled in tax evasion and other crimes. He found out about it and was willing to rat on them because they had also ripped him off. They hired a hit man who tried to kill him by shooting at him one night with a high-powered rifle while he was driving along his usual route home. The attempt failed because the bullet missed Dad’s head by only an inch.

I woke up the next morning and the FBI was all over the house. They were checking over his car and examining a bullet hole in the driver’s side window of his Lincoln Continental. They were also talking to my dad out in the yard.

The man who tried to kill Dad ended up getting caught and sent to jail. I think he must have ratted on the people who hired him because Dad ended up getting all the money his partners had ripped him off for. I know he received a big fat check, and we were happy about that. As to the rest, my father never talked about it and my mom didn’t want to hear any of that stuff.

Until Dad received that big check, this man who had never been anything less than a vice president at any corporation was suddenly unable to make the mortgage payments on the house. In typical fashion, he handled the

situation just like he handled his back pain; he struggled through without saying a thing. I remember things getting so bad at one point my Auntie Ter, as we called her, stepped in and bailed my parents out; even helping to buy me and my siblings school clothes at one point. Auntie Ter was my mother's sister and a good soul; a true Texan as my mother would say. She'd give you the shirt off her back, and did so for us many times.

My dad's life began to undergo a profound change when two FBI agents arrived at his office one afternoon and asked: "Mr. Stevenson, sir, why does your son Ronald have seven passports; each with a different name?" How they had discovered that, I don't know. I assume they just found it in their database; but when you think about it, that was quite an achievement for Ron. I once asked him how he did it and he told me that he would somehow obtain a false birth certificate, then get a Social Security number in that name, then a state ID and then simply apply for a passport. It was a piece of cake back then.

I truly believe that the reason the FBI went to my dad was that they couldn't accept the fact that a pampered twenty-four-year-old white upper-middle-class suburban punk could mastermind such a sophisticated crime organization. They must have thought Dad was the kingpin. But after seeing his office and checking his credentials, they let him alone; thinking he had no knowledge of what his oldest son was up to. The truth was that he didn't at that time, but the FBI had opened a can of worms and indirectly got my dad in the business!

A few weeks had gone by before Ron appeared at the house in Northridge. Dad pulled him aside and asked him: "Why do you have seven passports?"

Ron said: "Well, Dad, this is what we're doing," and then he laid out his real business to my father.

After my oldest brother laid it all out for him, he asked my father to join us and make it truly a family business. It didn't take him long to think it out and Dad - war hero, son of a cop - enthusiastically accepted. Ron had succeeded in grooming the head of our family and he would eventually transform him from the family's authority figure to one of the players.

I didn't learn about it until one day in Maui when Ron matter-of-factly announced to me: "Dad's coming into the business."

I remember the first day I saw my dad after he had joined the team. It was a weird feeling knowing he would be working with us as smugglers. I wondered what the eventual effect would be on his relationship with Mom. I knew she would never tolerate his living a life of crime. My mother was probably the only one in the family who didn't know what was going on, but

I'm sure she eventually had her suspicions that something was terribly wrong.

It wasn't long after Dad joined the team that Ron began making sure that our paternal grandmother was always around, so that she would also become part of the family business. Unlike my own mother, my grandmother on Dad's side would occupy stash houses and spend a lot of time going with Ron in order to create a façade that was above suspicion. My paternal grandmother, whom we called "Nanny," didn't like me all that much, but she adored Ron. He had a way of showering her with gifts; and though I believe he did love her, he also had his agenda behind what he did for her. After all, who would suspect any wrongdoings with an 86-year-old, gray-haired, sweet little lady hanging around or riding in a car, even though the vehicle might be full of hash or pot.

I remember one time being in a room with Rick and Dan, who were two ex-Orange County cops who worked for us. They were more or less Ron and Michael's yes men, bodyguards and basic all-around do-anything-guys. We had just gotten a 30,000-pound load of Colombian Gold in and had stashed it in the garage at our hideaway stash house in Healdsburg, California. Ron was having me stay in that house to keep an eye on things. I'll never forget walking into the room where they were weighing some huge bundles of pot and counting money. Two money-counting machines were operating at a relentless pace, just cranking out bundles of ten grand each. Ron was stacking them in a big pile and stuffing it into suitcases. All of a sudden, Nanny walked in as if nothing was going on and she said to us: "Would you boys like some potato soup?" It was classic and something right out of the Federico Fellini movies I loved so much. Ron loved Nanny's potato soup and she knew that was the way to his heart! I actually believe that was why he kept her around; she was a good front and she made great potato soup. He really used her, just like he used all of us.

Ron didn't groom my sister Gayle only because she was off doing her own thing and besides, my sister just wasn't around the scene and lived a separate lifestyle in a separate location. In addition, she was the sort who didn't care for all the glamour and glitz and didn't fall into the lure of all the material possessions. She just didn't seem to care about the fancy cars, big houses and the fancy yachts. I always felt sort of angry at Ron for never doing a damn thing to help my sister, being that she was severely afflicted with arthritis and if anyone needed help, it was her. He didn't give her anything simply because she wouldn't bow down to his bullshit.

Even though he appeared to be a leader, Ron was truly the black sheep of the family. With the exception of my mother, Gayle and Mark, he corrupted

just about everybody in the family: Me, Dad, Michael, Nanny, my Aunt Georgia, my Uncle Ken and Cousin Diana. He even got Michael's super straight, conservative, Republican John Bircher in-laws involved. He and Michael used to stash money and guns in a safe they had built into the closet floor of the conservative Republicans' house in Anaheim. They unknowingly became part of his organization. I hated this sort of thing because people could have gone down for being involved with something they had no knowledge of.

One example of this went on while my parents were living in Novato. Ron had a huge antique bank-sized safe in their garage; the safe had to weigh 1,500 pounds or more. My mom never questioned him about it. He just told her it was an antique and he was collecting old safes, and she believed it. There were times when Ron and Michael kept huge amounts of cash and coke in that safe, and that could have been very dangerous to my mom and other innocent parties. People could have gotten killed. Ron and Michael never seemed to care, as everything was always so cool in their minds.

Ron's whole thing was: "Let's keep it all in the family." He always felt family wouldn't rat on family and they could be trusted. He was a master user and a total abuser; he emotionally and psychologically abused my entire family. He only had loyalty to someone he was sure would be a danger to him if he was caught screwing them over. Contrary to how he treated his family, he treated other drug scammers and criminal business associates with utmost respect. In order to gain loyalty, he often treated his buddies better than his own family, showering them with gifts and lavish parties.

Ron had a family of his own. He had a daughter with his girlfriend Julie, but they never legally married. They named their daughter Daniela. Ron loved that little girl, and they were inseparable.

Julie came from a middle class family. She was from Kentucky. They had met at a party at one of Ron's friend's homes. She was a classy lady and loved the good life; she loved the creature comforts so much that she was willing to let Ron call the shots. It wasn't enough for him to control his wife, Michael and I; he had to control as many of the family members as he possibly could.

Mom paid little attention to what Ron, Michael or I were doing. I believe this was because she was totally in denial. If she had a son like John Wayne Gacy or Jeffrey Dahmer, she would have continued to embrace them and maintain their innocence. She would pray for them when they were in trouble. She was like the parents of the Columbine killers who never went into their kids' rooms or poked into what they were doing.

**Mom's biggest concern was her youngest. She poured her love into Mark. She was willing to give him the most because she always felt he was the least capable of taking care of himself. He had a rare psychological social disorder that was diagnosed as something worse than schizophrenia and he was truly not the most desirable person to be around at times. Sadly enough, he would go on to serve three different jail sentences for violent and crazy crimes. His incarceration began when he was about 21. He had been caught running a red light. After the cop gave him the ticket, he ripped the ticket up and threw it on the ground in front of the cop, got back into his small truck, took off, ran another red light and wound up being pursued by several squad cars in an all out chase. The chase ended after he raced down a freeway in the wrong direction. His hijinks caused multiple car crashes, but luckily no deaths. That got him four years.**

**Then there was the time he almost beat my brother-in-law to death with a two-by-four because they got into a fight about doing the fucking dishes! That almost got him three strikes with the law. All in all, he has done about twelve years of his life in prison over absolutely stupid shit. All all that kept him from serving a life sentence as a three-time loser could have been the fact that my mother's cousin was a Federal judge. The only time Mark ever got involved with our business was a big mistake and was the one time that we almost got busted.**

## **Going Global**

**Our pot operations got bigger once Michael returned from the service. In fact, it was right after Michael got home that Dad became involved. We were living in Northridge at the time. This was in 1971, when I was seventeen, and it was around the same time I obtained my first driver's license.**

**You are probably asking how I could get a driver's license if I had such terrible vision. I have always been considered legally blind, but it is not as bad as you think. I was issued a driver's license by the state of California, but I was restricted to daytime driving only. When I was in Europe, I had an international driver's license. Years ago, you could obtain an international license through AAA. All they required was a passport. Now, you have to show them your license from wherever you're from, but back then you didn't even have to do that.**

**My vision may be poor, but I learned the power of visualization early in life. While Ron and I were hanging out with the Brotherhood of Eternal Love, we**

fell into the practices of the “Self Realization Fellowship Church.” Their ideology included visualizing actions and goals, thereby helping them to materialize their dreams, much like what many great business leaders preach today about picturing success to create a self-fulfilling prophecy. Before long, Ron and I were meditating together, dreaming up new and inventive drug smuggling schemes and picturing the loads moving, untouched, across international borders.

With the incense flowing and the visions coming, I dreamed of doing a movie; a simple film set to music. This was in 1971, after my experience of working on Rainbow Bridge, and long before the concept of the music video was born. We chose Morocco as the film’s location. This would be a way of killing two birds with one stone. After all, the mountain region of Ketama in northeastern Morocco is where some pretty good hash can be found. With the exception of Afghani hand pressed primo, Moroccan hash was considered second to none.

Oddly enough, the film project was a scam that proved successful. “Medina,” as our film was called, was set to a jazz soundtrack by Donald Byrd. Our filming was mostly done within the walls of various medinas (the word literally translates to “radiant cities”) that could be found throughout Morocco. We edited the tracks together to produce a collage of exotic scenery. Sure enough, the short movie turned out to be an actual piece of cinema and ended up winning top awards at film festivals including Cannes, New York and San Francisco. And the funniest part about that was we had never even thought about making an award-winning film. Meanwhile, the Volkswagen buses, which the crew used to cart equipment around were also being loaded with hash and sent over the border, all under the guise of a legitimate enterprise, named “East West Productions, Incorporated.”

The odyssey to Morocco began with Ron and me going to San Francisco and spending \$35,000 on film equipment, including four Nikons, a Nagra sound machine and a 16mm Bolex movie camera. From there, we flew to London and then to Zurich, where we deposited \$375,000 into a Swiss account; money we had saved from our deals up to that point.

In 1971, the buying power of \$375,000 would equal nearly \$2 million dollars today. I remember going into the main Rolls Royce dealership in London just before Ron and I caught a flight to Switzerland. I was seventeen years old at the time. Ron and I were thinking of buying a Rolls Royce or a Land Rover. A salesman came up to me and said: “Excuse me young man, may I help you?”

I pointed out the biggest Rolls in the whole place, which was parked in the center of the showroom. It was a stretch version. The salesman began to act a little testy and said: "That's the same model the queen rides in, mind you!" It was as if I had committed a sacrilege by merely asking the price. You wouldn't believe how snooty he became, but, to his credit, he didn't kick me out. He must have thought I was some millionaire's son. I had been in a few nice limos in my life and knew how to carry myself around luxury cars. Besides, I thought the Chrysler Imperial limo my dad had when I was a kid was equally as nice as the stretch Rolls.

The salesman told me that the large Rolls cost fifty-five thousand pounds. A British pound back then was worth two and a half American dollars. The price translated into about \$138,000 dollars (probably \$650,000 in today's money). Few cars had six-figure price tags back then, but there are many makes and models of cars today that would cost over \$100,000. And a few are in the million-dollar range. I had always wished that I had bought a Rolls Royce back then and parked it in a garage for twenty years or so. It would have been a great investment! Now, just think about that when I'm discussing taking \$375,000 in cash to Switzerland in 1971. No wonder I had a problem understanding the value of things.

Perhaps the biggest difference between drug smuggling then and what goes on now was the comparative lack of violence. In my years of drug scams, I never used a firearm, had a gun pulled on me, was attacked or was even arrested. Unlike today's drug cartels, we didn't use violence to gain respect and keep people in line; we found that the lure of money was persuasive enough. In fact, the word "cartel" wasn't even in our vocabulary.

After making the deposit into the Swiss bank account, we kept enough cash to buy a Mercedes that was waiting for us in Germany. We paid \$7,500 for that car. We drove down through Belgium and France, and then met up with our crew in Spain.

They included Scott Bartlett, a New Age filmmaker and protégé of Francis Ford Coppola living in San Francisco whose first movie was "OFF/ON", and Robert Moon, an art teacher at the College of Marin. Eventually, the four of us made it to Spain with the Mercedes and three other vehicles we had arranged to purchase even prior to making our trip; a convertible Jaguar XKE and two Volkswagen buses. Once in Spain, we met up with B.J., Ron's old buddy who had been living in that country as a fugitive from the law. He resided in Marbella along the coast of Del Sol with his wife and child Ketama. Ketama was his little three-year-old son, and he had actually named him after the village the hash came from in Morocco! B.J. was a

classic scammer and a great guy with tons of great stories to tell. He let us use the garage of his villa to outfit the vans with the false tanks and pans that would be attached to the undersides of the vehicles.

Finally, after what had been a few weeks of travel and hanging out with in Marbella, our 86-year--old grandmother, Nanny, showed up with our parents and our brother Mark. They rented a condo on the beach next to the Hilton.

I'll never forget the night I took Nanny out for a drive in the Jaguar XKE. We cruised along the strip in Tormalinos, and I burned rubber up and down the coast. Tormalinos was immortalized in the James A. Michener novel "The Drifters."

It presented a comical picture. Here I was, a seventeen-year-old driving a new Jag with my little old grandma as passenger; both of us knowing all along that we were about to smuggle a ton of hash. It gave me a big ego boost to think that no one would ever suspect that we were fronting for a scam. It was the Cleavers meeting Marbella!

Once my parents got settled in, we all took off for Morocco to begin filming and to prepare for some of our biggest and most prosperous scams yet. A few of the loads were to go Europe, but most of it was bound for the States.

### **Mountains of Hash**

We finally arrived in Morocco and checked into the Hotel Sidi Kasim in Fez, a large city in the northern part of that country. Sidi Kasim is famous among Moroccans for the healing waters for which the hotel was named. We were already exhausted, and the following day Ron and I were scheduled to head up the mountains to meet with our suppliers. I was sitting in the hotel bar, sipping a beer alone when Ron returned from a trip to the capitol city of Rabat. I didn't know it then, but my exotic adventures were about to take a beautiful and unexpected twist. Ron walked up to me, and by his side was a young woman who I can only describe as a rare Moroccan jewel... dark brown skin, long wavy hair and high cheekbones

with deep Berber eyes. Her name was Fatima. I did not know it at the time, but Fatima would become part of my life and lead to a profound change in my relationship with Ron.

Ron had met Fatima while obtaining some documents from the U.S. Embassy. Somehow he managed to sweet talk her into coming back from Rabat with him to the hotel. This was a minor miracle for a man like him who didn't have much of a knack for hustling women, but his Mercedes and money did enough talking to get it done. He got her attention by offering her a job as an interpreter.

I was to learn that she spoke eight languages fluently, and she explained to me in her perfect American English that she was the granddaughter of a Berber tribal chief from the lower Atlas Mountains. The Berbers were said to be the first inhabitants of Morocco. Each of the thirty-seven native Berber tribes was known for some kind of craft, and her tribe was famous for growing roses. They would gather the petals to steam and create an essence which they would make rose water from or sell to the French for fine perfumes.

Ron and I were not the first foreigners to be taken with her beauty and magnetism, as she had been mentored and sent to the best schools, including a university in Morocco, by the French baron who employed her father. This was an enormous stroke of good fortune for her because even though she was the granddaughter of a tribal chief, her father was very poor. He may have been related to tribal nobility, but he worked as a cook and butler for the French baron.

That night the three of us drove around Fez for a while before Ron said he was tired and wanted to call it a night. He may have been hoping Fatima would join him. But he was a man who had practically zero communication skills when it came to women, relying instead on raw economic power to serve as his aphrodisiac. So, his wish was not what happened. "Come on Ron, let's go out," she said in this soft but determined voice. I glanced back over to her in the back seat, prepared to follow wherever she led. I could sense something very different about her from the girls I had been with back home. I needed someone who could love me for who I was and I could trust, and she seemed to be that person. And if she could love me with all my flaws, I would be able to finally love myself.

Ron dropped us off, leaving us to fend for ourselves, and went home alone. I knew he wasn't happy, but I really didn't care. This was when he had a girlfriend back in the States named Suzie, and it was before he would meet Julie. I had no qualms about going after Fatima because I was only

seventeen years old and unattached. In the case of Fatima, it was love at first sight. Serious sparks stoked the flames of desire.

Later that night, Fatima and I took a taxi from the Hotel Sidi Kasim to a place ten kilometers into Fez. She took me to Le Club, a disco that also offered belly dancing. Once the belly dancing was over, the lights dimmed and pop music blared from a sound system. The establishment transformed into a classic European discotheque.

Fatima and I danced the night away. I recall the Rolling Stones' "Brown Sugar" playing, and that was her... sweet brown sugar. I was seventeen, and although anything but a virgin, I had never felt what I was feeling then. It was a brand new feeling, and the only word I could come up with to describe it was "love."

We eventually returned to my room at the Hotel Sidi Kasim to make love on a Berber rug between the twin beds. We talked into the early morning hours, and then made love again. There were things she told me that night which convinced me that she was as much a peace and love person as I was. She had said: "Both of my granddads were 'Chieftains' within their tribes. My granddad on my dad's side of the family came from the Gharb Valley. All of his land, including his orchards of oranges, tangerines and mandarin oranges, were appropriated by the Bonnard family of France."

I asked her how he felt about having everything taken from him, and then I asked: "Did he want to get back at them?"

She replied: "He was a true warrior, but he was sad that there would ever be any war. He became a warrior of peace, teaching all: 'Be as a willow, not as an oak. I know I have erred. Bend. Do not fight. War is something no one can talk about.'" What she told me about her granddad only confirmed what I already knew. She was a woman who came from good stock; and I was in love with her.

The following morning, Ron and I set out for the mountains in the Mercedes, with Scott Bartlett and the others in our party following us up in the Volkswagens. Ron was extremely upset, and neither of us said much. I sat in the passenger seat and stared out the window as we climbed into the Reef Mountains on a winding and badly paved road. Below us, you could see Fez fade away beyond the rolling valleys. All I could think of was Fatima. I'm sure Ron was thinking about her also.

Getting to Souk Kleta De Ketama was a real drive from Fez. It took about 14 hours and meant driving along a road that could be very dangerous, depending on the time of year. We had to pass through various checkpoints, although we were to discover that the guards paid far more

attention when vehicles were coming back down and could possibly be transporting hash. At an elevation of 8,500 feet, we finally pulled into Ketama, where the warm night air was filled with the smell of hashish; the plants covering thousands of acres in every direction. There were huge trees along the side, and I was told that the Berbers would strip away the inner bark from those trees to produce cork. Cork was not the big product in Ketama, though. Most of the inhabitants were involved in producing only one thing... some of the best hash in the world.

As I was to learn, the Berbers who lived in the village planted the cannabis Indica in May and then harvested in August just before fall. After the plants had flowered and turned into buds, they cut them down with machetes, piled them into bundles and let them dry in a big shed. The crop was eventually run through sifters in order to separate the seeds and stems from the rest of the plant.

It didn't take me long to get into the swing of things. Once the seeds and stems were separated from the rest of the plants, we stretched some cheesecloths over a large aluminum tub and slowly began the process of separating the fine pollen from the rest of the product.

We got different grades of hash, depending on how fine the cloth was. The very best came from the super fine pollen we would scrape off the plastic used to line the walls of the room where we worked sifting and making the hash.

The top commercial grade was called "zero zero double zero," and you could tell it was good when you took it in your hand and it could be pressed just from the heat of your palm. This was the best, and it was often hard to keep the Moroccans from cutting it with a lower grade pollen in order to make it stretch. Cutting it added weight, but it lessened the potency.

It was always a game of price and quality and no matter how much business you did with them and how loyal a customer you were, our connection was always a bit slippery. In order to minimize any hanky-panky, I would literally sleep with the newly made hash. They would bring our freshly made pollen into the mud hut I slept in and would pile it to one side of the room, and that served as my bed. I would just throw a Berber carpet over the top and sleep like a baby!

I'll always remember that first trip to Ketama. We drove through the souk (the local marketplace), and then we continued for another hundred yards to approach a village of primitive huts. Some of the huts were dug halfway down into the ground, with others forged into the mountainside.

I'll never forget the very first hut I stepped into. Lined around the edges of the rooms were chairs with pillows on them. Some of the chairs were made of wood and others were fashioned from mud and straw bricks, just like the houses. The floors were covered with Berber rugs, and the roof was made of sticks and corrugated tin. There was no electricity or indoor plumbing, but that didn't bother me in the least. I was seventeen years old, in the midst of a high adventure (no pun intended) and having a ball.

When I made that first visit with Ron, our connection had a huge supply ready and the next few days were spent cutting and fitting the packages of hash to fit into the false bottoms of the vehicles. Eventually, my father commissioned a ten-ton hydraulic press to be made in Germany and we transported it up to the Reef Mountains. Dad's press certainly did the job. On that first trip, however, we made do by jamming two hundred kilos of hash into one of the Volkswagens. The process included pressing the hash into bricks covered by two layers of plastic, which were completely sealed, cleaning the bags, sprinkling them with talcum powder and then repeating the process until each container was enveloped by four bags and layers of talcum to diffuse the smell. The hash cost us \$120 a kilo (2 pounds, 2 ounces) from our connection and could be resold in the United States at a wholesale price of \$900 a pound, netting us close to \$400,000 per vehicle that was brought into the U.S. (nearly \$2 million in today's money).

My neighbor in the mud hut across from mine was called "Padre" (his name had nothing at all to do with the Spanish name for "priest"). He was the father of our connection, and he used to sleep in his hut with a few goats and chickens right there in the same room with him. His room was warm and filled with straw, so he literally slept with the goats. Padre was about 65 years old at the time.

I'll never forget how he used to snort a concoction he had made from black tobacco and some kind of menthol substance. I used to ask him for a snort now and then and he'd laugh as I used his concoction. It made me feel as though I had blown the back of my head off and I would react in a very funny way. Padre had this little transistor radio he'd carry around all the time, and he played music from stations he was able to pull in from Spain. He was a classic Moroccan Berber and a great old man.

In the winter, when the snow piled up, we used large clay pots filled with smoldering coals for warmth inside the huts. Occasionally, we'd get crazy and throw large chunks of hash into the fire, filling the huts with a thick cloud and giving us a high that lasted for hours.

**There were weeks when the vendors who supplied the souk with fresh fruits, vegetables, meat and fish were unable to make the trip from Fez, and all we had to eat were eggs from a few chickens, bread with zibda (butter) and couscous. In fact, I asked for couscous so much, they eventually nicknamed me “Couscous.” The nickname followed me back to the States, and my brother Michael called me that for years!**

**Our operation went into high gear once we began using movie production projects as fronts for our hash smuggling. While filming “Medina,” we would constantly be sending newly outfitted vans containing hash in hidden compartments over The Straits of Gibraltar to Spain, where our runners, who were usually clean-cut and respectable looking American tourists, would drive the vans through the checkpoints into Europe. From Spain, they drove to various ports where the vehicles were loaded onto ships leaving for the United States. The same runners would typically pick the vans up in New York, and then they would then drive all the way to California. When they arrived at their destination, they were paid \$25,000 and allowed to keep the vans. We let them keep the vans to avoid having too many vans to dispose of. When we began smuggling hash out of Morocco, the driveway and much of the curb in front of my parents’ home in California grew crowded with blue, yellow and red VW buses. My father was unable to sell them off as fast as we were sending new ones over. We figured that the cost of the vehicles was just another business expense.**

**Only once did one of our runners get busted. I hadn’t packed the load, it was put together carelessly and sniffer dogs were able to detect the cargo. The runner ended up taking off after we bailed him out, costing us the fee for arranging his bond, but saving him some serious time in prison.**

**The film ruse worked perfectly. Anytime anyone asked us what we were doing, the movie making supplied the perfect diversion. Unlike any other legitimate business we could have created, even hardened customs officials always wanted to know more about the movie rather than taking the time to thoroughly check our vans. They would even ask if they could be in the film, and we always complied, shooting some footage with smiles on our faces.**

**No sooner had “Medina” successfully wrapped up than I returned to Fez to reunite with Fatima. She had gone to the States in the interim, even admitted to a brief romance with an American who asked her to marry him, but returned to meet me at the same hotel where we had first met. Seeing her in the bar again, the months apart only served to convince me she was the one and only. After all, she had come forward without any prompting about her brief affair. This convinced me that she would be completely**

honest with me. We had dinner with her parents in Rabat. When we finally made it back to Fez, we found ourselves alone in the Hotel Sidi Kasim. This time, instead of a single night, we spent an entire week making love.

### Living the Movie

Inspired by the sweet confidence of love, I was hit with yet another vision. The idea behind our movie “Holding” was even more ambitious than Medina. It meant obtaining the Spanish government’s approval and cooperation to film drug searches and arrests at their borders. Back then, people were routinely sentenced to six years and a day for even the smallest amount of drugs, with far more time for larger quantities. We would shoot scenes panning into various customs agents uncovering contraband, juxtaposed with shots of smugglers’ faces as they realized they had just bought themselves long sentences in some horrific prison. We also filmed inside those jails, where young European and American tourists spent years, sometimes their entire lives, for being caught with little more than a personal stash.

The film ended up being a success in all kinds of subversive ways. First, the Spanish, who were still ruled at that time with an iron fist by Generalissimo Franco, thought we were making an anti-drug film. In fact, it proved to be a harsh documentary about an overzealous government bent on excessive sentencing. Secondly, the same customs agents who were enthusiastically performing for what can best be described as an early version of the reality TV series “Cops” didn’t give a second thought to our vans going only one way after filming. That is, of course, straight from Morocco towards the rest of Europe and any port going to the United States. Although not winning the awards that “Medina” did, “Holding” made us far more money.

In general, almost all of the schemes we used, including the films, were mine. Ron handled the money and bartered with the suppliers, while Dad was the suit and tie front man who laundered the money through various corporations. Upon his return from Vietnam, Michael assumed the role of selling the product wholesale in the States. Meanwhile, I worked in the mountains and meditated, ever dreaming up new and creative ways to keep the hash moving. I viewed all that was transpiring and regarded the entire process as almost a spiritual quest, and insisted that holy pictures be affixed to every load. Whether it was an act of God or just plain luck, the loads kept getting through and the money piled up.

During those years, I'll give Ron credit for one especially inspired idea. He bought two lions from a zoo in Casablanca and brought them up to the mountains of Ketama, where we built false bottoms into the cages, packed them with hash, and within days, the lions were on their way back down with a tarp draped over the top. The checkpoint officers stopped us, threw open the tarp and decided against searching any further after they saw our cargo. The lions ended up at the Copenhagen Zoo, where the director was on our payroll and cleared them through customs, enabling us to sell the hash in Denmark. It was always easier to get loads into Europe than into the United States, and we still managed to get a net profit of \$600 a pound.

Michael, in general, stayed in Southern California, but he did come over for one of our biggest runs at the time. The project in question was our third movie, "The Around the World Porsche Race," and it was to lead to our biggest load to date... bringing in a thousand pounds of Afghani hash to meet with a load of a thousand pounds of Moroccan hash in Europe, and then shipping the entire ton over within the fiberglass walls of a cigarette racing boat my father had purchased in England. We even received a small amount of sponsorship from Porsche for the "race."

Ron went to a Porsche dealer on Van Ness Boulevard in San Francisco. He bought four 914 Porsches and made our deal. We paid \$7,000 for each car. They gave us decals, racing suits and helmets. This might not seem like a lot, but it certainly added to the credibility of our front.

When we got the Porsches home to Mill Valley, we had a guy cut the gas tanks in half and then we soldered them so that we had a compartment to put the primo hash in. We purchased an El Camino which was supposed to be for filming and to serve as the fix up car but the pickup truck was in fact needed to haul fuel and tools for the Porsches, which we had altered to hold only a few gallons of gas in order to carry as much hash as possible. Ron told my brother Michael to drive the El Camino over the Khyber Pass.

The filming of our race started in Kandahar, Afghanistan. The Porsches raced along the Khyber Pass, headed for Karachi, Pakistan where corrupt customs officials would facilitate our journey. Unfortunately, our crew encountered a massive traffic jam of various transport vehicles, which slowed things down and put us way behind schedule. We had to be in Karachi by a certain time to make our connections. Michael proved that it would have been best for him to just stay at home and deal with selling the stuff there, because he came up with the jackass idea of buying a box of M80s, or quarter sticks of dynamite, packing them into oranges and hurling them at the trucks to get them to move over. By the time the crew reached Pakistan, a large contingent of machine gun wielding soldiers were waiting.

Apparently someone had called ahead and told the army: “A group of Porsche-driving terrorists are on their way towards the border!”

The soldiers pulled all the cars aside and announced: “We know you have opium.” They lined all of our drivers up against a wall and pointed machine guns at them. Then, they started going through the bumpers and wheel wells. When they couldn’t find anything, they pushed the El Camino into a position where it straddled a narrow ditch, in order to inspect the undercarriage without having to use expensive hydraulic lifts. An agent climbed into the ditch to get under the pickup truck. He was about to drill through the bottom of the vehicle, which was packed with five hundred pounds of Afghani Primo, when he saw a holy picture taped to the metal, in this case the image of Baba Ji, the Indian holy man. The agent dropped his drill, ripped the photo away from the El Camino and came back out to approach Michael, who was being held at gunpoint nearby.

“Who is this?” the Pakistani asked.

“It’s God,” Michael replied.

“What’s God doing on the bottom of your car?”

“Keeping us safe,” Michael responded, which was obviously true as the soldier handed the picture of Baba Ji to Michael and then let our entire crew go. The Porsche crew met the Moroccan crew on schedule, and the cigarette boat was packed with the two thousand pounds of cargo and shipped to the United States on the deck of a big cargo ship.

Our good fortune in evading the law had seemingly run out, though, when the United States Customs dogs discovered the sizable stash once it landed on American soil. My father had given a customs broker a fake name and company to have the cigarette boat delivered to a warehouse upon arrival. He had also given the customs broker the keys to the warehouse. Since the Feds knew about the load being there, they decided to conduct a stakeout. They waited two weeks for someone to come and claim it. After we learned from an insider what was going down, we all met to figure out what to do. If it were a VW packed with two hundred pounds of hash, we would have let it go; but this was a ton, and not only that, half of it was hand-pressed Afghani Primo hash worth \$1,600 a pound. I suggested renting the adjoining warehouse, which we did, and in a single night we went through the wall and retrieved the boat and the \$2.5 million worth of hash from under the noses of the FBI. Michael later told the FBI about that scam and they were dumfounded. It was a case they had never solved and thanks to what he told them, they could finally close the book on it.

We were all getting way too cocky, and Dad got into the act. His idea of lying low while the Feds tried to find anyone in our area matching his description was to organize a trip for himself, Mom, Mark and my eighty-six-year old grandmother to countries including Fiji, Samoa, Thailand and India. Their travels included picking up a VW pop top camper in Europe, which they drove down to Morocco. Ron and I met them at the Holiday Inn in Fez, took the van up to Ketama where we packed it with 200 kilos of hash and then our family was off to catch a ship called the “Michelangelo” headed for New York. I wasn’t happy about this one at all, but Ron, the same guy who’d used Mark and me for a run when I was twelve and Mark was seven, didn’t seem to care.

On the trip, Dad met John Mitchell, the U.S. Attorney General. Being that Dad was so good at dropping the Stevenson name, they hit it off right away and shared a few nights of drinking on board the deck of the ship. Dad audaciously talked him into posing for a photograph with him on the deck of the ocean liner, while standing in front of our van carrying 200 kilos of hash. This later proved to be a fortuitous meeting for our smuggling efforts.

Upon landing in the States, a VW identical to ours and in fact, just in front of our van, was busted for heroin. The customs agents were about to pull Mom, Grandma and Mark out of our vehicle to conduct an intensive search when Dad saw John Mitchell nearby. He took Mitchell’s arm and walked up to the customs agents saying: “Hey boys, come over here and meet your boss.” After Mitchell shook hands with his loyal federal government employees, an agent signed my father’s paperwork and cleared them through. I’ll never forget Dad arriving back at home in California, gathering all his friends in his home and proudly showing off that photo to all the boys. It was a classic scammer’s trophy, certainly like none other.

Michael flew out to New York, picked up the van and drove it home, where we unloaded it. When we sold the hash, greedy Ron made a cool 360 grand. The only thing I got from it was a few thousand bucks and a kick in the pants. Dad got a first class trip around the world with the family and maybe a few grand. Mom, Nanny and Mark got nothing, of course, since they didn’t even know they were accomplices. This was the typical way Ron would keep things in the family and keep money in his pocket. I was pissed!

Another year went by and I happened to learn that Caterpillar Tractor Company was holding a trade show in Casablanca. I went to my father and Michael and talked them into our next scam. The plan was to send a

backhoe over to Morocco, making it appear to be part of the show, meanwhile filling the arm of the backhoe with a big payload of hash.

The backhoe was brought up into the mountains of Ketama, and Ron and one of the guys who worked for us started to cut the backhoe arm open. Jack was a straight-laced Santa Rosa, California native who Ron had recruited for his experience in working with fiberglass and in welding. Jack was part of an ever growing team of employees we had working under us. After Ron and Jack were done, they loaded the backhoe arm onto a flatbed truck, but failed to wait for clearance from Absalom, our main squeeze and the son-in-law of the chief of police. His usual routine was to make the long drive along the very poorly paved road from Ketama to Fez, lining the pockets of any authorities along the way and getting them drunk on Johnny Walker Black. On this particular occasion, though, Absalom failed to return in the usual amount of time, and Ron got tired of waiting for him. They foolishly went down the road without knowing what lay ahead. It cost them dearly. Ron and Jack were caught and sent to a Moroccan version of hell on earth.

### **Getting Ron Out of a Moroccan Prison**

Fatima and I were still in the U.S. when Dad received the panicked call. Ron and Jack had both been busted with the load at one of the checkpoints and were being held in a prison in Fez. We all understood Ron was facing some serious time in one of the worst prisons in North Africa. Since I knew the country better than anyone, Michael and my father gave me \$10,000 and sent me back to do whatever it took to get Ron and Jack out.

There was another ripple effect to Ron's predicament. Dad had carelessly left the documents involved with Ron's situation in Mom's car. After she saw them, she asked my father about what had happened. He told her that Ron had gotten in trouble in Morocco and admitted that hash was involved, but intentionally hid his involvement in the smuggling operation from her. In a way, Ron had to take one for the team.

When I arrived at the Moroccan prison, I can only describe it as my worst nightmare, something straight out of the movie "Midnight Express."

Outside of the prison were hundreds of poor Arabs who were desperately waiting to see their relatives. By the time I made it inside the 1,300-year-old structure with twenty-foot-high walls, I had to pay off a guard just to get any further. They led me into a dark room with only a tiny window, and suddenly Ron's face appeared on the other side through a ten inch space. We weren't even allowed to hold a conversation under civilized conditions. The background noise was so loud we had to scream at each other.

"Just listen to me," he started to say. He was trying to display attitude and swagger through it all, but his voice was cracking, and when he wiped his bangs from his face, I saw he was wearing a filthy gray prison jumpsuit. The first thing he asked me for was medicine for crabs, and then he told me he'd made a friend inside, a German who was sentenced to fourteen years for smuggling stolen Mercedes Benz automobiles into Morocco. "This guy George has a contact with the chief of the prison," he explained. "We're going to need cash."

I went into town and bought the crab medicine, along with shampoo, soap, chocolate, canned tuna and cigarettes. Upon returning to the prison, the crowds and even the guards inside were all grabbing at me, demanding money. Thus began a routine of living in Rabat and traveling every other day from the capitol to Fez by train, a ten hour round trip. I would buy the supplies, fight my way into the prison, and repeatedly pay off guards to get the goods and some cash inside, all the while calling home for more money.

What I soon learned through my own connections was that Ron's "friend" was, in fact, trying to keep receiving his share of the supplies I brought. Really and truly, George never wanted Ron to get out. The guy was pure evil.

Things were getting desperate, and Ron was growing all the more freaked out as the days stretched into weeks. As his trial approached, the hope of getting him out before he faced a potential twenty-year sentence faded into the damp and dark walls of the Fez prison.

Jack was doing even worse than Ron. He had already been hit with an appendicitis attack, and as the guards simply thought he was faking, they chained him to a bed in some disgusting hospital ward before operating after three days. Jack almost died. Meanwhile, his Santa Rosa housewife still didn't have a clue where her husband was, and we kept making up stories. It was amazing how we were able to put her off for months.

I returned to Rabat one evening and just prayed for guidance, begging to be led to anyone who might help. I was staying at the Hilton, where I went

straight for the bar. I had checked into the Hilton because I knew that was where I could meet high-level people, and the high level people could be found in the bar. The name of the bar was Shrub et Shouf, which meant “Drink and Look.”

On this particular occasion, I found two men, obviously Westerners, sitting in the lounge area with an elegant Moroccan woman. I recognized one as Harry Baird, a black actor who had co-starred in “The Italian Job” with Michael Caine. As I overheard their conversation, I learned Baird was in Morocco to serve as the liaison to the king for Columbia Pictures. The studio was about to begin filming “The Message,” starring Anthony Quinn, in Morocco. Baird was there with Princess Chadlia, a Tunisian who had married into the royal family of Morocco. Unsure of what to do next, I followed Baird to the elevator, and as soon as the doors shut, I had seven floors to get his help.

“My name’s Scott Adlai Stevenson,” I blurted out, hoping the family name would catch his attention. “I have this problem, and I need help. My brother’s in this horrible prison here.”

For whatever reason, Baird listened, and even asked me up to his room to talk about it further. We ordered a bottle of wine and I told the entire story, playing down the smuggling, but leveling on everything else. I knew Ron was wrong about George, the evil German, and his trial was scheduled for the following week.

“I’ll talk to some people,” Baird finally agreed.

Shortly thereafter, I was contacted by Princess Chadlia and summoned to one of the many palaces of the royal family in Rabat. In that meeting, she told me she could help, but it would cost \$5,000 to pay the judge, which really was nothing considering what my brother was facing.

When I next visited Ron, I told him the deal; I’d finally found someone to get him out. He looked through that small window and simply shook his head. “Oh, man,” he whined. “You shouldn’t have done anything.”

“What have you done?” I asked.

“I told you, George is going to take care of all this.”

Within days, Ron had been sentenced to five and half years in Ifrane, another prison. Finally, after a total of five months, I paid off the judge, the chief of the prison, some half-baked lawyer I had hired to do nothing and the Moroccans finally let him out. The entire thing cost \$26,000, including my hotel and travel bills.

The first thing Ron did upon release was check into The Palace Jermain Hotel inside the medina in Fez and order ketchup and eggs. He was working on his third order and Jack was sitting on the couch next to him nursing a glass of scotch when I showed up to celebrate.

“You cost us way too much money,” was all Ron said.

“Hell, I got you out,” I replied.

“Staying at the Hilton? What the hell was wrong with the Holiday Inn?”

“If I wasn’t staying at the Hilton, I never would have found the people who got you out.”

Ron just shook his head while pouring more ketchup onto his eggs.

Now that his oldest son was free my father flew over, and suddenly both he and Ron were laying into me about the money before they drove off with Jack, heading for the airport. They left me with \$10 in my pocket and a one-way ticket home from Portugal, and I only had one day to make it to the airport before it expired. I had to sit in that airport for twenty-four hours, waiting for my connection, with no money in my pocket and nothing to eat. I managed to get myself to the Lisbon airport in time and within a few days, arrived back in California.

### **Oh Lord, How The Money Rolled In!!**

Our California smuggling operation grew bigger and bigger after we left Morocco. Our deals now included unloading thirty thousand pounds of Colombia Gold every few weeks and various loads of Thai pot. We were no longer involved with Morocco, but had shifted our activities to Asia and South America. Ron’s involvement with Colombian cartels led to his trafficking in cocaine. It brought with it a new set of problems, but Ron had always displayed a knack for solving logistical issues.

The secret of success in life is to develop a knack for making lemonade when life hands you a lemon. We discovered that out of a load of 1,000 kilos of coke, there might be 20 or 30 kilos that were damp and seemingly unable to be sold. They were damp simply because they weren’t processed very well in the first place. These damp kilos turned out to be a financial blessing because we would take them and turn them into high

quality coke that had a pearlescent appearance to it. We had chemists who would take the damp cocaine and transform it into an unbelievable coke that would have a spectrum of colors similar to a rainbow. The coke was still in a powdery form, but it glistened in different colors. The texture was not like powder, but more like crushed abalone shells. It was the best of the best you could get in the way of coke. That was the cocaine that the stars wanted and were willing to pay huge money for. We sold it to them for \$2,400 an ounce. This made each kilo worth \$81,600; and that was in 1976 dollars. A kilo of that coke would still be worth \$81,600 today, but, of course, the buying power of today's \$81,600 would be far, far less than what it was in 1976; nearly forty years ago. Back then, you could have bought mini-mansions for \$81,600.

We were dealing with enormous amounts of money back in those days; and, of course, it was all in cash. We were confronted with the problem of what to do with literally rooms full of cash. The family's major worry became where to stash it all. My dad set up various corporations to disguise the millions that were coming in each and every week. We even bought a bank in Santa Rosa, which solved a lot of money laundering issues.

Centennial Savings and Loan had started as a little bitty bank by the Russian River in Guerneville, California, near Santa Rosa, in 1977 with assets of less than \$2 million. Within a year or so after Ron and my father became involved, Centennial went from assets of \$10 million to \$250 million. It was obvious that something was going on, but, amazingly, none of the locals seemed to pay any attention.

Ron and my dad took what had to have been the ugliest three-story building in Sonoma County and poured over a million dollars into it and made it into the nicest building in the county. It was located a quarter mile east of the heart of downtown Santa Rosa, right on Fourth Street. It was on a corner that had a lot of traffic, and if you drove around to the back of the building searching for a parking space, you would typically see seven brand-new top of the line Mercedes parked there. That alone should have been a tipoff that something was going on.

When you went in the front door, you would see two teller cages on your left hand side, and you would also notice that the entire lobby was tricked out in top quality three-quarter-inch high dollar solid oak paneling. There was so much high quality oak paneling that it would almost blind you. What made this bank unique was a big oak wall that was retractable. Whenever the bank closed, the big wall that was ten feet high and twenty feet wide would slide in front of the teller cages so that the actual bank

operations were completely sealed off after hours. It camouflaged the inner part of the bank so that no one would think there was a bank in that building. It had a big picture window in the front, but if you looked inside, all you would see was what appeared to be a lobby and a reception desk.

Ron, Michael and Dad, together with Sid Shah, who acted as their front man for the bank, decided to make a project out of "The Stonehouse." The Stonehouse was on the same road as the bank, but a mile further east. It had been a strip club for a number of years. It was shut down in 1974 and remained empty until my family got into the picture. Centennial bought it and put an enormous amount of money into refurbishing the place. They were converting it into commercial rental property for executive offices. It was so obvious, however, that they were really just dumping money quickly. They were spending far more money than the situation warranted. With all the money they put into remodeling The Stonehouse, they were sure to lose their asses once they sold it.

They even bought an outrageously expensive photocopier for the bank. It had to be the world's biggest copying machine because it was fourteen feet long. The instant you inserted the item to be copied, the copies would be shooting out fourteen feet away.

Ron, Dad and Sid were just buying any new products; the more expensive, the better. They probably figured that when they liquidated, whatever they received would be greater than dealing with a money launderer. Plus, they were taking massive tax write-offs for all the money lost.

The average person in Santa Rosa paid no attention to what was going on with Centennial. All they knew was that a bank was growing fast. They really weren't doing as much business as you would think. When you came down to it, few people kept their money in there. The biggest investments my family made through Centennial were the purchase of an entire city block in Las Vegas across from the MGM Grand and a combination strip mall and housing development in Sonoma County called Lakewood Hills. The Las Vegas property included a hotel, a casino and a clothing optional apartment complex, since Ron loved nudity. It was later documented in the course of federal investigations that Ron had poured millions into the Lakewood Hills project alone.

All of this went unnoticed in Sonoma County because it was such an upscale place; it's wine country. It was an area where there was money made back in the days of the Gold Rush in 1849. Back in the early 1980's, there was still a lot of old money around, and the idea of people overspending was not that unusual. Ron's Centennial scam didn't stand out at all. It probably would have been a different situation if he had pulled

it in a blue-collar neighborhood. The nicer the neighborhood, the more privacy people require and the more privacy people tend to give other people.

Everything was fine as long as the drug money was coming in. There came a time, though, when the drug money dried up and the house of cards collapsed. Centennial Savings was declared insolvent in 1985. The top-level executives were all prosecuted, and Sid Shah ended up serving seven years in prison. Sid died in 2008. All of the principals ended up with nothing; and the Centennial Savings saga was just another lesson that crime doesn't pay in the long run.

When you have outrageous sums of money at your disposal, it is nothing to go out and blow \$10,000 a week. Foolishly spending \$10,000 a day was not unheard of. A lot of guys in the drug trade had so much money that they became degenerate high stakes gamblers. I remember a friend of Ron's named Bernie who was crazy about backgammon. He would lose \$300,000 in a matter of days, and it would have no more effect on him than if he had purchased a \$5 lottery ticket and failed to win. He would walk away, but come right back the next day to play and win. If he dropped \$300,000 one night and came back to win \$600,000 the next night, the thought of being grateful for winning back what he lost and quitting once and for all never crossed his mind.

High stakes backgammon was at the very core of his existence. He would go without sleep for three or four days in a row, coked out of his mind, just to play high stakes backgammon. His problem was that he had become bored with the simple pleasures life offers. He had been desperately seeking something to do and, as crazy as it sounds, high stakes backgammon filled the bill for him.

Things did not end well for Bernie. As time went on, my older brother Michael put Bernie in jail by testifying against him. The last I heard, Bernie has nothing left and has been reduced to a homeless drunk. He lost everything. In fact, all of the guys who were dealing with Ron are either dead, in prison or have nothing left. It just goes to show that wealth that is not earned through honest labor is never really appreciated.

Michael even put good old likeable B.J. in jail, after testifying in court against him. I felt bad about that and when B.J. got out, I met with him. He came to see me in a shop I had opened at the time; the Bali Moon Trading Company in Santa Rosa. He gave me a big bear hug, and we smoked a fat one together. I told him: "I'm sorry about your going to prison. I had nothing to do with it." He was really cool about it. I gave him a really nice chair that came from Toraja as a "homecoming present." I suppose I did

that out of a sense of guilt. I thought that B.J. might have learned from what he went through and that he would never think of going back into drug smuggling or any other crime. But I was surprised. B.J. went right back into the business.

I guess that in B.J.'s case, as in the case of so many others I have known, the drug business became far more than a means of earning a living: it took over his whole life. To varying degrees, scamming became a way of life for me and my brothers Ron and Michael. Let this be a warning to all young people out there: If you get into criminal activity, the odds are that it will take over your life, and you will wind up with nothing in the end.

You will find that it will become virtually impossible for you to say: "Okay, I've made enough and I'm cool with it. I'm going to be low-key, low-profile, fly under the radar screen." It just does not happen. That's a total myth. Everyone involved in crime wants more and more and more; because everyone in crime becomes greedy.

When you have enormous amounts of money coming in, your entire value system becomes distorted. You have no conception of the true value of anything. It is the destruction of your personality. You are doomed to losing touch with reality.

### **Michael's "Club Fed" Vacation**

After Ron was released from the Moroccan prison and arrived back in America, he got into dealing Thai sticks. He began working with a man named Alan May, who was a White House aide during the Nixon administration. He had been Northern California Field Director for Richard Nixon's 1968 presidential campaign. He later was appointed to a series of political posts, including White House counsel.

Alan May made deals with Ron and Michael for Thai sticks. He also supplied Ron and Michael with California State Senator license plates which enabled my older brothers to park just about anywhere they wanted and kept them from having their vehicles searched. In fact, all of our associates in the pot trade referred to Michael as "The Senator." Ron was known simply as "R."

Alan told us a story about a pot scam he had tried to pull off while he was on an official mission to Thailand. This occurred shortly after President Nixon met with the King of Thailand. The king presented President Nixon with a Buddha, and Alan May was in charge of shipping it back to

Washington, D.C. Alan came up with the bright idea of getting a replica of the very same Buddha, cram it full of Thai sticks and ship it back to the States, so that he could take delivery. He shipped both of the huge Buddhas at the same time. By accident, the Buddha with all the Thai sticks wound up back in the National Library in Washington, while Alan wound up with Nixon's Buddha. Alan was unable to get to the drugs, and so his plot was foiled by plain old bad luck.

Later on, when Michael cut his deal with the FBI, he told them all about the Thai sticks. Michael told me he wasn't clear on what exactly happened, but the Feds somehow managed to remove all the Thai sticks out of the Buddha in the Washington library.

Alan May later became an Orange County defense attorney. In one of his best known cases as a defender, he won a manslaughter conviction and a three-year prison term in 1985 for a Vietnamese student Min Vinh Lam. Min Vinh Lam was accused of murdering a Cal State Fullerton professor Edward Lee Cooperman. May didn't last long after his career highlight as a criminal defense attorney. He died in 1991 at the age of 50.

Ron did some big loads of Thai sticks, but strictly as an investor. He himself did not go over to Asia. Michael did a test run and got busted two years after the fact. He did the load, it came in and we got the pot. Michael pulled it off by taking a big heavy computer from that era and making it look like some real advanced high tech stuff. A hidden compartment was built underneath it that could hold eighty pounds of Thai sticks. It was a smaller load than we were planning to regularly smuggle in, but we considered it a test run.

Michael thought he had the problem of getting the pot into the U.S. solved when his wife Betty arranged for one of her relatives, who happened to be a U.S. Customs agent, to see that the computer containing the pot was cleared. This came back to bite Michael a couple of years later when the Customs agent and his wife divorced. She was a woman scorned; and she ratted on him.

Michael ended up getting convicted and spent a year and a half at a federal correctional facility in Lompoc, California. He was there when H.R. Halderman arrived at that correctional facility in the middle part of 1977. As expected, when Halderman showed up, all of the newsmen were there. Michael managed to steal the scene. He maneuvered his way into the picture so he could stand behind the Watergate conspirator. Michael pointed at the celebrity prisoner and silently mouthed the words: "My bitch!" It broke the place up.

Since Michael had lots of money at his disposal and the warden was totally corrupt, he and his friend bought the warden. They purchased a bar in a hotel in Lompoc for the warden and in return, the warden arranged for them to go out some nights and party. The warden and his closest associate would pick Michael and his friend up and take them to this bar. They would play pool, plus they had hookers and rooms to take the hookers to. Afterwards, the warden would see to it that Michael and his friend were brought back before dawn. There were Mafia guys at Lompoc, and they also enjoyed special privileges. They had their hooker girlfriends coming in. When people talk about "Club Fed," they don't know the half of it.

Michael and his buddy had all the steaks they wanted. The prison ran a big farm, and steers would often come up missing. My brother worked as one of the cooks, so it didn't take much for me to put together what was going on.

He was still in the F.C.I. when Christmas, 1977 arrived, but Mom, Dad, me, Mark and even Ron, who was on the run, all showed up to celebrate with Michael. Ron got in using a fake I.D. We brought in a 24-pound turkey, plus a cooler full of Dom Perignon and Heineken. I even brought some coke in. We were sitting in the visiting room with a Mafia guy from Chicago, and he and his friends all joined in. We were all sitting at a big table when I noticed the Mafia guy's girlfriend go down on him. It made me rather nervous because my mother was sitting there, but she didn't notice a thing.

My mom was just so happy to see Michael. A big dude who worked in the mailroom came down to see us. He said: "Mrs. Stevenson, I don't know what to say. Someone keeps sending me cases of Chivas Regal. I don't know who's doing it, but it sure is good."

We had arrived in two Cadillac Seattles. Part of the Lompoc prison was without walls and used only white lines as boundaries for the prisoners. While my family was still visiting with Michael, I got in one of the Seattles with two plates full of turkey and all the trimmings and drove down to see Michael's buddies who were standing behind the white boundary lines because they didn't have anyone to visit them. I brought the guys some food because my mother taught me it was more blessed to give than to receive, especially on Christmas Day.

The good times came to an end when the government pulled a spot check one day. It was a surprise inspection of the prison by the Feds. They came into my brother's room and found that he had a full bar stocked with Chivas Regal and Heineken. He did a couple of months in the hole and from that point on, Michael was forced to do his time like a regular convict.

## **“If You Want to Get Down, Down On the Ground... Cocaine”**

**My excessive cocaine usage had built up over a couple of years. There was the time when I was 23, and my brother Ron gave me a kilo of blow. I was in this hotel room in Newport Beach. I was getting into a bag of the best blow you had ever seen. It was like crystal or diamonds that shined like rainbows when the light hit it the right way; it was the kind of stuff we would sell to the stars.**

**I was getting coked out of my mind and I had a lot of “Playboys” and “Penthouses” there in the room. I was drawing pictures of the women in the magazines. It was something to do with my hands while I was coked out of my mind. I was in a frenzied state; drawing pictures and going wild. All of a sudden, I became paranoid. I thought the cops were outside the hotel, parked in a car, waiting to come in and bust me. I kept looking out the window, trying to spot their car. Whenever I saw a shadow pass by my window curtains, I thought it was the heat getting ready to bust into my room. I literally started eating the cocaine so that they couldn’t find it in the room. I then began dumping the whole kilo of coke, \$64,000 worth, into the toilet and then I filled up the bathtub and washed the wrapping to remove all trace of the blow.**

**The only problem was that I was so high on coke and my heart was pounding so fast that I thought I was going to die. I went to the office and said: “Call 911! I think I’m having a heart attack!” The cops showed up at the door to my hotel room. It was so obvious that I was just coked out of my mind. My eyes were like saucers, and I had trashed everything. By this time, I had torn the wrappings into little tiny pieces and had flushed them down the toilet; getting rid of all evidence. There was shit all over the room; all these magazines, empty bottles of Heineken and shit everywhere. An Orange County cop walked in the door, and I said: “I think I’m having a heart attack!” The cop told me to sit on the bed, assuring me that an ambulance was on its way.**

**They took me to the hospital in Costa Mesa. After they took care of me, they just said: “You’re fine now.” They gave me a couple of valiums and told me I could go back to my hotel, and they told me all I really needed was rest. No one questioned what I had been doing, and I got away Scott free. I was amazed the cops never gave any indication that they suspected me of being coked out of my mind. I mean I was toasted! Life had definitely become a walk on the wild side for me, and that could not go on.**

At that point in my life, however, I was not willing to make the big change needed to survive. I continued on the road to eventual ruin, and I came very close to being caught.

The closest I ever came to being busted occurred during my Mill Valley days. This was when we had stash houses all over Marin and Sonoma Counties. We had just rented a new place up behind Tam High. There was a 55-pound bale of Colombian Gold packed in a burlap sack in the house. It was a sample bag I was using to show a few potential wholesale customers. The wholesale price for Colombian Gold at the time was \$350 to \$400 a pound. I had the sample sitting upstairs in a loft style room.

On this particular night, one of our connections named Malcolm came by. Malcolm was a longhaired, bearded, hippie-looking type who always carried a briefcase. He was one of our dealers and had come up to pick up some samples from Ron. My brother Michael had met him at the Lompoc prison. Mike got more connections out of being at Lompoc than any other place.

Ron, however, had gone out somewhere and wasn't expected back until the next day. It was very late when Malcolm arrived, so he went upstairs and went straight to bed. He would often stay overnight in that house with us.

On that night, he had a big fat ounce of Maui Wowie pot in his briefcase. Normally this wouldn't have been any kind of a problem, but on the night in question, my loose cannon baby brother Mark was staying there with us. The big rule in the drug business was that you never left pot lying around. You never left evidence of drugs out in the open. My little brother had left a big wooden bowl of Colombian pot on the living room table; and then he went out to wander around the neighborhood, supposedly jogging. In reality, he was somewhat of a peeping Tom; even more sick than we had all originally thought.

All of a sudden, some cops came driving up in front of the house and parked down on the street. Mark had been jogging at 1:00 A.M, and someone must have reported him because of suspicious activity. I thought: "Oh crap!"

I was standing there at the window and I had six grams of coke on me. It was in my pocket in separate little one-gram packets. In an instant, I shoved them down my pants. The cops came to the door. I was coked out of my mind at the time. I had been in the studio playing music, doing lines of coke and chugging down wine.

We had about \$50,000 worth of musical equipment in that house. There were Persian carpets piled all over the place. The cops started shining

their lights into the house. They asked: "Do you know this guy named Mark Stevenson? We have him in our car. He's been wandering around and says he lives here."

I said: "I never heard of him. I don't know who he is."

"Who are you?"

"David Allen."

"Do you have any I.D.?"

"I just moved in here, as you can see. I've got it somewhere around here."

One cop was looking over my shoulder. He said: "What's that on the table?" He started flashing his light on the coffee table and he saw the bowl full of pot. He pushed his way through and said: "Stand where you are and don't move."

He took the bowl full of pot, found a paper bag, flipped the bowl up and poured the contents into the paper bag. He rolled the bag up and stuffed it into his pocket. Then, he went over to Malcolm's briefcase, opened the briefcase and found the big beautiful bag of buds. He shoved that into his other pocket and then he looked at the door that led to the upstairs.

The cop looked at me and said: "What's up there?"

I said: "A loft, but there is a guest up there sleeping."

He headed up the stairs to where Malcolm was sleeping. Our guest was using a sleeping bag I had given him and he was slumbering next to the 55-pound bag of Colombian Gold. The cop was upstairs for about three minutes, but it seemed like forever. I was certain we were busted; finished.

The cop finally came down, looked around and said: "Look, if anyone knows who the kid in the car is, he'll be in the jail at San Rafael Civic Center; if they want to come and pick him up." And then they left.

They took the pot they had found with them without a word about it. They were Mill Valley sheriff's deputies. I had been told they were corrupt, and thank God they were! I was worried out of my mind because I was convinced they were going to return with backup.

I ran upstairs and woke Malcolm up. I said: "You wouldn't believe it! The cops were just here, they were looking all over the place, but they overlooked the pot!"

It was right there in the open as plain as day. If it had been daylight, the cop wouldn't have missed it. Lucky for me, it happened at night and he

just plain overlooked it. I believe that the deputy was so excited about ripping us off for the few ounces that he did get, that he must have been in a big hurry to get out of there.

Malcolm bolted from the sleeping bag like a frickin' jackrabbit the instant he heard what I had said. He grabbed his brief case and was out the door. I took a bunch of photos of Ron that were on a desk, put them in the burlap bag with the pot and then tossed the burlap bag out of the top window of the house. It landed down among some redwood trees. I did this because I was so sure the cops were coming back. I figured it was best to hide it among the trees because the house was on a hillside, surrounded by redwoods. We had no trouble retrieving the big burlap sack the following night.

My dad happened to be staying down the street. I went to his place, woke my father up at around 3:00 A.M. and said: "You won't believe it! Mark was out being a peeping Tom or some bullshit and was picked up by the cops. The cops showed up at the house and Malcolm was there."

My dad said: "Oh that little bastard! I knew he shouldn't have been up here!" He claimed he was going to give Mark a royal ass whipping, but I knew that was all bullshit. Dad tried to be a tough guy, but it just wasn't in him. I really don't think a tendency for violence was in any of us, and that the only violent one in the whole family was Mark. I remember one time when my dad said he wanted to get heavy with B.J. because he owed us money. He said he was going to: "Pick up a piece, go over to see B.J. and take care of business." It was all bluster, though, and Dad didn't really mean it. We had Rick and Dan, who were two ex-Orange County cops, and they were supposed to be our enforcers, but they never did anything. Any talk of violence from the Stevenson clan was all bullshit; it never happened.

The same could be said about Primo Tony and his crew; L.D. and Fat Boy. They didn't resort to violence because they were all ex-hippies and deep down inside just didn't have it in them. It just seemed that anyone who had gotten into drugs based on the hippie ideal of peace and love and with all their belief in Karma was not likely to become a violent, ass-kicking, Uzi-toting hard guy.

I was finally getting burnt out on the Marin County rock 'n roll drug scene. I was tired of the Sweet Water scene, of hanging out at the bar every night, of getting drunk with all the coke whores and Mill Valley hangers on. I had tons of friends when that bag of blow came out. They would literally come out of the woodwork down in the basement of the bar. Almost every night, I was hanging with the likes of Mike Bloomfield, Elvin Bishop, Joey

Covington, Dan Hicks and the Jules Broussard band. There was always some name artist in that bar.

I was getting more and more coked out. I knew that I had to beat my habit, and the only way I could do it was to change the people I was hanging around with. I needed a change of scene, and an opportunity came up for a business deal in Thailand that was too good to pass up. Well, at least I thought so.

### **Breaking Brotherly Ties**

Without question, the tyranny Ron had created over my family caused me to become disillusioned about the whole ball of wax. In a way this story is really about Ron and I. He looked upon himself as “Mr. Big,” but I was the one who would give Ron all the ideas for the sophisticated scams we did in Morocco and the U.S. We complemented each other a lot, but he was a truly greedy man who never wanted to admit that any of the ideas were mine. I received absolutely no credit for anything. I’d be sitting there one day telling him some of my ideas for scams and the next day he’d be telling the same idea to Michael or Dad or one of his associates and take all the credit for the idea. It really pissed me off.

Ron had a fragile ego where he had to be THE man. He had to be the top alpha dog of them all. He used to say: “I’m keeping control of the money, we’ll all make money, but I’m going to keep it in the pile here. We can all enjoy the yacht, the cars and the fringe benefits, but I’m going to take control of the money.” He’d always complain about Michael and me being coked out too much, but he was really using that as an excuse to stay in control. In some cases, he may have been right, but so what? What was mine was mine, and he didn’t want to give me what I had coming. After awhile, I would get very upset with him, and although I hated confrontation, we would eventually tangle.

I would holler at him: “I’M NOT A DOORMAT! I’M YOUR BROTHER AND DESERVE MY CUT!”

He would scream back: “I MADE THE DEAL, I SET THE RULES!”

Ron also treated Dad like a lackey and caused a very strange relationship between father and son, with the son taking control of the family. My father originally thought he had been brought into the operation as a partner, but the first time Dad expressed his displeasure at the way Ron was talking to

him, his oldest son lashed out at him and said: “You’re not my partner!! You’re my employee!!”

Dad eventually became fed up with it. One day in the midst of transporting some money for Ron, he picked up a bag containing \$500,000 in cash, said, “Screw you, guys” and walked with the 500K.

I always thought he should have taken at least a few million, and in fact I often regretted not having done that very thing when such an opportunity came along. It happened one time when Ron flew into Burbank airport from Santa Rosa in his Cessna 420. He called me very late at night after he had landed. He told me to come pick him and his buddy up, and to bring Dad along. We left in Mom’s Volvo.

When we arrived at the airport, the gates were all locked and there was no way of getting our car to the airplane. So, we pulled up to the outer fence closest to Ron’s airplane and got out of the car. Ron had three large blue Samsonite suitcases with him. He lifted each one over an eight-foot-high chain link fence to me. Dad helped me load all the suitcases into the trunk of the Volvo. We then drove Ron and his friend to another buddy’s house in the Bel-Air section of Beverly Hills.

After we arrived at his buddy Jeff’s house, Ron revealed that he was carrying \$4 million in cash in the three suitcases. He wanted to count it right then and there, and Dad and I had no choice but to be there for as long as it took. The money was all in twenties, fifties and hundreds, and it took the whole night to count it; even using two counting machines.

While all the counting was going on, I thought: “All Dad and I had to do after we put those suitcases in the trunk would have been to just get in the car, pull away, take a sharp left, head for Mexico and kiss Ron’s greedy ass goodbye.” I guess you could say we were just a couple of loyal suckers. Anyone else would have gotten at least a 200K slice of that four million for doing what we did, but we got nothing!

Ron had a habit of using family members to do things without bothering to compensate them. That was his idea of keeping it in the family. He paid outsiders big money to do things that I did for him, and he’d pay me nothing. He’d rationalize things by saying: “Well, you got to go on the yacht. You got to go on the trip. You’ve got a good life. What do you need money for, I take care of everything!”

A newfound venture materialized when Jimmy, an old Brotherhood guy from the Mystic Arts scene that I had first met when I was twelve years old, reappeared in my life. We were reunited through some drug dealer friends of mine. After a coincidental meeting and a short conversation at a friend’s

house in L.A., we remembered each other. We talked a bit of history and put two and two together. Jimmy had remembered Ron and had never forgotten me from the Mystic Arts. This was when I was a kid and did my first scam with Ron and Buckwheat. I mean talk about a small world!

Jimmy and I got to talking and he asked me if I had any contacts in Thailand. He told me that he had some heavyweight scammer friends who needed some contacts to be able to land either a 737 or C130 cargo plane and load it with a large amount of pot. They needed clearance to land and were willing to pay big bucks for it. They also needed contacts to acquire up to 40 tons or more of pot. I told him I might know some people but would have to check and get back to him.

The following day, I flew back to Marin County and went to see my Thai friend Mario who was a bus boy at the Lark Creek Inn, a high end restaurant in San Anselmo. Mario had previously been a bus boy at a restaurant owned by my girl friend's family. I knew him quite well because I often invited him to our house after work to party, do coke and smoke some Thai sticks. I had often fronted him small amounts of pot to sell so he could make some extra cash. I considered fronting him the pot as basically just a favor, and Mario would always come around after a week or so and pay me. In other words, he was trustworthy.

So, as soon as I got back, I called Mario and asked him to drop by. I said: "I've got a business proposition for you, and we need to talk."

Mario showed up, and I dropped Jimmy's proposition on him. He said: "Hey, I have a friend. His dad is a Thai general and maybe he can help."

Mario went home that night, and then he called me the following day. He said: "Hey, I talked to my friend Pong. He says he talked to his dad in Bangkok and says he can do."

Pong lived in the same area as Mario and I, so we set up a meeting at Pong's house. After we arrived there, we went out to lunch and discussed the deal. The following day, Pong reconfirmed that his dad was ready to go and had given us the green light.

This all happened very fast. Within a week, all three of us were flying down to L.A. to meet Abdul, the heavyweight drug scammer; and then we would be on our way to Bangkok!

Abdul's plan was to use a C130 to bring tons of pot out of Thailand, but he didn't have any contacts in Thailand. After meeting him, I made my final decision to leave Ron and work with Abdul and his organization.

Ron became paranoid when he found out that I was going to be leaving the family business and working with Abdul and company. Abdul was about Ron's age. He was as big as Ron, and maybe even bigger, as far as how much money he was bringing in from drugs. But then again, Ron never paid me shit, and Abdul assured me that I would be in for a big slice of any of the loads we brought in. If Ron had been giving me what was rightfully mine in the first place. I wouldn't have gone looking for another horizon.

Abdul gave me \$60,000 to go to Bangkok with Mario and Pong and wine and dine our contacts. Pong's father, who was a general in the Thai military, was in command of Don Muang International Airport. Abdul considered the cash I was given as "good faith money," but in actuality, it was more cash than Ron had ever given me at one time.

Now that I was finally able to leave the family business, Ron became really nervous because I left to join some guys who were as big as him, if not bigger. He became very paranoid about it. He was thinking that if I got caught or angered my new associates, it might come back to haunt him; but when I worked with the family, he felt safe.

My leaving created another major problem for him because I was the one who paid attention to details and was the best at following precautionary measures to prevent getting caught. I was the most cautious and professional about the whole thing. I never talked over the phone about business and always kept things cleaned up and tidy; saving his ass more than once!

I was willing to jump in with other drug scammers because they were telling me: "Hey, let's go rock and roll. Let's make some big money." When Ron became paranoid and asked me about what I was planning to do, I didn't say much of anything because I never really wanted to fight with anybody. All the while I was thinking: "Hey, you're not paying me; so fuck you!"

Abdul had arranged for some of his associates to accompany me on the trip to Thailand. Their purpose was to help run the operations. A few days went by, and then a fellow named Stan and his girl friend flew with Pong and I into Thailand with the payoff money and working capital. They had total of a million and change in cash wrapped around their midsections. The money was to pay a bribe to a high-ranking military official, which would assure that the scam would go off without a hitch.

We flew in on a commercial airline. This was in 1979 and back then, there was no problem getting on a plane while carrying that much cash, but there could be a problem getting through customs into Thailand. When we

arrived, Pong's dad picked us up at the airport right on the tarmac in a military van. Remember, this was back when they still wheeled portable stairs out to the planes to allow the passengers to exit the cabins. Pong's dad was standing at the foot of the portable staircase. He had the van waiting for us so we wouldn't have to go through customs.

We took the million dollars to Pong's father's house and placed the package for safekeeping behind a Buddha. Pong's dad had a shrine built in his home, which housed a two-foot-tall cast gold Buddha. Since it was a religious object in a very holy place, it was unlikely that anyone would disturb it, which made it a very good hiding place. That same night, Pong's dad gave Stan a gold Buddha with a ruby set in it, probably because he was the one who put the million bucks behind his temple! He then gave the rest of us old Buddhas from his temple. He explained that Buddha would protect us.

It happened to be my birthday and we all went out to celebrate. We went to the Hyatt Rama Bangkok. At the time, it had one of the best restaurants in Thailand.

It was a very fancy restaurant, complete with three violinists and a cello player to provide classical entertainment. After we were seated, we ordered lobster and caviar. We had a really nice dinner. There were seven of us. We had brought along four bottles of very expensive champagne that we had found in a shop in town and we also ordered five bottles of Dom Perignon. No doubt about it, we were out for a good time.

For dessert, the chefs brought out a beautiful triple layered chocolate cake. They had made it especially for my birthday. They had also hand formed beautiful cognac glasses made from chocolate. They served a pear liqueur that they had also made themselves, and they poured the liqueur into the chocolate glasses. The idea was to drink the liqueur and then eat the glass.

After they cut a slice of the deliciously decadent birthday cake for Pong and served it to him, he snuck up behind me and smashed the cake in my face. I was all decked out, wearing a black-velvet Yves St. Laurent jacket and a white silk shirt. Pong's playfulness incited the wildest food fight you could ever imagine. One of the other guys threw champagne on me and the next thing I knew, somebody threw water in my face and I was hit with an empty lobster shell. I reciprocated by taking one of the bottles of champagne, shaking it up, blowing the top off and squirting the whole table with Dom.

**It was a surreal scene. The chefs were just standing there in their chefs' uniforms, watching it all take place; rolling their eyeballs and shaking their heads. The string quartet continued to play without missing a note and all the other diners in the place were in total disbelief. In its own way, it was wilder than the famous scene from the movie "Animal House." It was sheer madness.**

**Stan provided the grand finale of the night. The entrance to the room had two glass doors with absolutely no markings; only two handles. They consisted of thick plate glass. Stan was a six-foot-tall, 275-pound former football player, and he walked right into the plate glass doors. He was walking at a full head of steam, and the glass doors literally shattered into a thousand pieces. It was amazing that he didn't have a scratch on him. He attributed that to the Buddha he was wearing. Stan's accident added five hundred bucks to the night's tab.**

**I threw another seven hundred on the table just before we all left to pay for the cleanup. Pong went over and picked the money up, counted it and said: "That's too much." He took a few hundred, put it in his pocket and left the rest. It was an act of greediness that bothered me just a little bit, but I realized I was on his home turf.**

**The next day, I flew to Chang Mai to meet with Pong and his dad. They were going to drive up to Chang Mai with the one million in cash. Chang Mai was where the Chief Air Marshal of all the Thai armed forces was staying at the time. He was to be paid that money in order to guarantee that the plane that would be used to get the pot out of Thailand would be able to arrive and depart without any hassles. The Chief Air Marshal had control of the military airport just outside of Bangkok that would be used for the scam. There would be some Thai military present at that facility, but there would be absolutely no customs authorities to worry about.**

**I checked into a Chang Mai hotel called the Orchid Lodge. I woke up in the morning and noticed a local newspaper that had been slipped under the door. The morning's headline read: "CHIEF AIR MARSHAL DIES AT AGE 56 OF HEART ATTACK." I sensed that this was our man. Pong and his father had never actually told me the name of who they were dealing with, since any information I had been given was strictly on a "need to know" basis. The first time that I was to meet him was at the meeting that had been arranged. All I actually knew at that point was that Pong and his dad were driving to Chang Mai with a million dollars in the trunk of their Mercedes, and that everything was still in play.**

I was lying in bed reading “The Bangkok Post” when the telephone rang. I picked it up. It was Pong. He said: “Scott, hey listen, something really bad just happened. You gotta come back to Bangkok right away.”

I immediately left the hotel and got the first flight to Bangkok. The bad news was confirmed. The Chief Air Marshal who had died was our man!

The death of the Air Marshal proved to be just a speed bump, as far as our scam was concerned. Pong and his dad immediately shifted into Plan B. They engaged the services of Pong’s aunt, who I called “The Black Widow.”

According to Pong, she was connected with Flying Tiger Airlines. She had interests in forty-four hotels in Thailand, which had prospered making millions through serving the needs of all the U.S. soldiers coming to Thailand from Vietnam on R and R. The hotels supplied hookers, drugs, booze, gambling and anything else they wanted. She had a full service operation going and morals seemed to be no issue with her.

Pong’s aunt started romancing the guy that they knew was in line for the position of the new Chief Air Marshal. She brought him over to Pong’s dad’s house and we had a casual meeting to iron out the details. This all happened within less than a week after the death of the old Chief Air Marshal.

Once I was assured that the scam was back on schedule, I left and went back to California to meet Abdul. He said: “Look, things have changed. We’re still going to include you, but just step aside and let us handle things from this point on.” He said: “Go back to Bali and chill out. We’ll tell you when the load comes in and we’ll get your share to you.”

So, I did and I never got paid a share of the load after it came in. I got some money in front for my expenses involved in going to Thailand to set things up, but because of my contacts they had made millions and pulled off some very successful scams. The contacts I made gradually enabled Abdul and others to build one of the largest drug networks in the world, a network that would ultimately include a rogue CIA agent, military officials on the take and a host of underworld drug kingpins; including a major player, known as “Mr. G.” I, however, never got the big payday I had been promised. Bottom line: I had been fucked.

If you had seen me in Bangkok back when I was doing these huge deals with multi-star generals, you would have never ever suspected me of being a major pot smuggler. You would have thought I was a seventeen-year-old suburban kid on vacation with my mommy and daddy. I had short hair and would wear La Coste shirts and Bermuda shorts, while at the same time

hiding an enormous Thai Gold Chain dangling with nine gold-encrusted Buddha's that I wore for protection. I looked so innocent that no one would have ever suspected what I was doing: Negotiating with some of the top military officials in the country. I was 24 at the time, and I looked really young for my age, which greatly helped me to avoid being detected. No one had any idea of what I was up to, especially the DEA.

### **1982: A Year That Led to Tribulation**

1982 was a very bad year, for it was the year Ron mysteriously disappeared. Not a word was heard from him again and from all indications, my oldest brother is dead. A few days after his disappearance, his home exploded in a ball of flames. Fortunately, neither his wife nor his daughter nor anyone else was around at the time of the mysterious explosion. The unexplained destruction of his palatial home only added to the mystery.

I was in Hawaii at the time and when I got back to the mainland, all my family members told me was that Ron had been missing for several days and his house was destroyed. The two ex-Orange County cops, Rick and Dan, were on high alert. Michael was paranoid, and he went out and paid \$7,000 for two attack trained guard dogs.

Michael also put up a little memorial temple on the mantelpiece of his fireplace. There was a picture of Ron and a candle burning. This was in Michael's house in Tustin. We held a brief memorial service at Michael's home, and then we all went to a ranch up in San Bernardino; all of us except Mom, Dad and Mark. Mom and Dad were not around. They were trying to keep them away. They didn't want them to see the picture of Ron next to the candle. My dad knew what was up, but they were trying to hide it from my mom, and Dad was keeping her away. My mom was kept in the dark about Ron's disappearance for years. She eventually figured things out for herself, but she never talked about Ron again. She was in complete denial.

Michael became desperate to find out what had happened to our brother. He hired a P.I. who was head of security for the Academy Awards to get to bottom of it. He paid the man \$25,000, but the private investigator couldn't come up with anything backed with solid evidence. One story was that my oldest brother was killed because of a drug deal, and there was another story that someone was worried that Ron was about to cooperate with the Feds to avoid prosecution. He had been talking about turning himself in

and cleaning himself up. He was tired of being wanted. After all, he had been a wanted fugitive for almost ten years. But then again, after the Feds approached Dad about all of Ron's passports, they never seemed to actively pursue the case. If Ron was hiding, he wasn't really hiding that well. To date, nobody knows for sure what happened to him.

I truly believe my brother was murdered, and I seriously doubt that he intentionally disappeared. I suspect that it was one of the Colombian cartels that were supplying him with cocaine. One story was that Ron obtained some money for some blow and then he put it into some other scam. He did that in an attempt to get an even bigger return before he paid the Colombians back. That story never made sense to me because Ron had tons of money. He could have covered any tab he may have run up with a Colombian cartel, if worse came to worse. I know for a fact he had three or four million dollars buried somewhere on the grounds of his house that never turned up. He used to bury millions in big huge PVC pipes. He would close off both ends and bury the big pipe packed with cash. They were big commercial pipes and you could screw the ends off them. I guess he learned that trick from our dad, who was the expert on plastic pipe!

I often thought that he might have been kidnapped and something happened to make the kidnapping go bad and he wound up dying. He could also have been seriously considering working a deal with the Feds; and it was possible someone took him out before he could talk. The Colombians knew he was wanted and they might have been afraid that if he decided to go to the Feds, he would turn them in. On the other hand, Ron was the type who would have kept it to himself and then went ahead and did it.

I only know for sure that he had a two-year-old daughter and he was talking about turning himself in. He really didn't have a heavy rap on him, though. All it amounted to was the passport violations. The only reason he would have considered turning himself in and doing the time would have been that he had grown tired of looking over his shoulder. There were a lot of different theories, and I'd still like to find out what happened to him. I've had three people tell me he's at the bottom of a river in Petaluma, California. They could be right, but no one knows for sure.

Once Ron disappeared, everyone in his organization scattered. Michael and Dad began to desperately sell off assets, including an aerospace company, before the Feds moved in and confiscated what was left. The Feds didn't show up until a couple of years later. One of the major assets that the Feds seized was Centennial Savings, the savings and loan the family poured so much money into. Once the Feds got deep into the

records of that thrift when it was declared insolvent in 1985, the information they uncovered fueled the flame of the S&L crisis that spread like wildfire.

I believe it took a while for Michael to see the handwriting on the wall and once he did, he became paranoid. He had a gorgeous home in Tustin. His neighbors included the legendary singer Jose Feliciano and several players on the California Angels major league baseball team. He began to use piles of coke, and he began to get rid of things. He sold his interest in a machinery company that grossed six million dollars a year. Then he broke up with his wife. He hired the two ex-Orange County cops named Rick and Dan to provide him with round the clock security.

I was still affiliated with Michael and my father on some business deals, but at that point everyone dropped off the radar screen. So I decided to split to Asia as I felt that there was money to be made in that part of the world.

While I was gone, my brother Michael agreed to cooperate with the Feds. He turned on anyone and everyone he knew in the drug world and established a working relationship with FBI agents in Santa Rosa. Michael confided to me that he had gotten \$300,000 to \$400,000 out of the Feds over a period of time. They didn't give it to him all at once, but they would give him \$10,000 here and \$5,000 there. When Michael went to them, he said: "Look, I'll work with you, but don't touch my family and don't touch a few of my friends." He put his family and friends on a list, and he called that "tickets on the bus." I was in no danger of being prosecuted, though, because even if Michael hadn't gone to the Feds, I still would never have had to talk to them. They had nothing on me. I had never been caught and they had no evidence to build a case against me. Whenever the subject was brought up, Michael would explain why he had made his decision by saying: "I did it in order to keep the family out of prison." He didn't fool our sister, though. She told Michael: "You didn't save me from prison because I had nothing to do with it in the first place." Once again, like so many other times in his life, Michael had acted in his own self-interest.

Michael and I were the ones who had built up Ron's empire. The difference was that Ron was not addicted to drugs, while Michael and I were. The fact that he didn't do drugs was the only advantage he had over the rest of us. He was more disciplined in that regard, big time. He was into it in the beginning, but as things went on and the money became bigger, he would get pissed off at us. He'd say: "You can't be doing this shit! Keep your heads clear and let's make some money."

Michael was a worse addict than me. I did drugs, but I didn't do that crack shit. Michael got out of control. He acted crazy; like he fucking nuts. It was pitiful because the guy was a nutty genius who was fucking brilliant.

He was a mathematical genius. He knew numbers. Michael could walk into a room and see right through you in two seconds. He'd read you up and down and sideways and backwards. He was a brilliant person, but he was also a fucking drug addict. He ended up committing suicide. I don't know what was going on in his head when he did that. It was pretty sad, for me anyway.

I finally cleaned my act up and I quit all the drugs. Michael, however, kept doing it for years and years; while I had stopped it back in the late 70's and early 80's. Michael just kept going on and on. He came and stayed with me in Hollywood once, when I had an apartment there. He started crashing on my couch. He'd go out in the middle of the night, at two, three, four in the morning. He would go to the most dangerous parts of town. He would score a rock and come back and sit there on the couch and take a couple of hits. Then, the paranoia would set in. He'd start putting a pillow over his head. He'd say: "Scotty, Scotty, take a look out the window! Make sure everything's cool!" He was totally paranoid at those times. He had nothing. He had scabs all over his body and weighed only 130 pounds. I finally had to throw him out. He became irate when I did that. He screamed: "Fuck you! I'm your brother!"

I then called the cops on him. I called his FBI buddies. They flew down from Santa Rosa. Steve and Chuck came. Chuck was the Sonoma County Sheriff. Steve was with the FBI. Michael was going to testify in court for some big drug cases. He was the star witness for the prosecution. If he had gotten busted while going out to score some crack, then his credibility would have been destroyed and his testimony would have been worthless to the Feds. They came down and they knocked on the back door. I answered and said to them: "Come back at 6:00 P.M. and wait. As soon as you see the shades go down, that's when you go to the door and knock. He'll be back in that room doing his crack."

They came back at the agreed upon time, and he let them in. When they walked in, they said to Michael: "Hey man, you can't be doing that shit because you're gonna fuck things up for us." They could have busted him, but they didn't so he could testify. After they got all their convictions, they thanked me for what I had done. Chuck, the Sonoma County Sheriff, said: "I owe you one."

Unfortunately, the visit from the lawmen was only a speed bump along his road of addiction and he wouldn't quit. I finally said: "I can't handle it

**anymore, Mike. I can't handle this bullshit. Just fucking get it out of my house!"**

**Nearly twenty-five years later, Michael tragically committed suicide by overdosing on pills in a rundown apartment in Riverside, California. A decision was made to keep the news of Michael's suicide away from our mother. She just couldn't handle it. Just before she died, I could tell she was wondering where Michael was. No one told her, though. Michael committed suicide in 2009 and Mom died in 2010. I personally believe that Mom and Michael are together, and I hope it's somewhere in a good area.**

### **Colonel Jack Bailey and Operation Orion**

I made the decision to join forces with law enforcement in 1985 when I had gotten involved with Colonel Jack Bailey, a man who would become a dear friend of mine. I met Colonel Bailey because of Link Lockett, a tenant of mine in Bali. Link was much more than a tenant, for he became a good friend of mine. He was originally from Arkansas and had been an Air America pilot during the Vietnam War. Air America was a CIA operation. Link sent me a brochure describing the Colonel's work in Asia on behalf of MIA's, POW's and the Vietnamese boat people. The brochure contained a photo of the Akuna III, a large ship Colonel Bailey was using in his project, which was named "Operation Rescue."

Jack Bailey had a magnificent military record. He served three years in the Pacific during World War II. He also served in Korea and Vietnam. In addition, he flew with the RAF for two years. During that time he was involved with the Cyprus problem and the Berlin Airlift. He flew the Berlin corridor for six months, escorting air transports against Russian MiGs. Michael told me that the colonel flew over 250 missions in Vietnam and that he was the third most heavily decorated veteran in American history.

My brother Michael, who had been working as an FBI informant for two years after Ron disappeared, had told me that any information I could find on all my old cronies in the business could be useful and that the FBI told him they would be willing to pay me on anything that resulted in a bust. If the leads were good enough, they would give me money to operate with. I went to Michael and said: "I want to talk to your FBI friends because I want to fuck these guys. They fucked me. Let's try and make some money out of it." He referred me to some agents he had worked with and gave me their contact information.

On a trip back to the U.S., I talked to the FBI by phone about some of my findings. They set me up for a debriefing with a former FBI agent who worked out of San Diego. He had been deputized into U.S. Customs and the DEA. The meeting would take place just before my return to Thailand. He assured me that none of the things I discussed with him would appear in any government data base.

We went out drinking after the first meeting. We went to TGI Friday's. During the evening, I asked him what it was like being an FBI agent. He said: "It's just like being a little kid, man, playing cops and robbers."

On my second meeting, I did a general debriefing session with a couple of agents. We went through my history as a drug dealer/smuggler. The next day, they took me down to their headquarters, which was in the business district of San Diego, near Treasure Island. They gave me \$600 to go to Thailand and set up an operation that would give them information. The ticket to Thailand cost me \$750. I was going anyway and at the time, it was just another \$600 that I received. I gladly took the cash, thinking at least I would get something for the time I felt had been wasted. In my mind, I was still planning to get even with all the bastards who had made millions off of my connections, such as Primo Tony. They had cheated me out of all I had coming and ripped me off.

I began to think of Colonel Jack Bailey. Michael and I called the Colonel. We told him that we had talked with U.S. Customs and they were interested in talking to him. Not long after that, Colonel Bailey contacted me in Bangkok. He said he was in town and wanted to see me. We met at the President's Hotel on Soi Sukimuit. He was with General Poumino, the leader of the Laotian Resistance at the time. After the General left, the Colonel approached me on a call he had received from a friend of his in the task force out in Houston, Texas. He had picked up Bailey's name, as well as the name of the Akuna III, on his computer. I was also in the computer. The one thing I had made most clear with the DEA and Customs was that neither my name nor any information I gave them was to go into the computer. They had failed to keep their promise and in so doing had endangered my life.

After having confessed to the Colonel what I had been doing, we put our heads together and agreed to join forces. I suggested we could tie in the drug investigation work with the POW/MIA issue. I had been getting a trickle of information on that very issue through various Vietnamese and Thais I had been associating with; all drug people. We agreed to make it a point to contact Customs and try and get some proper finances to set up an operation throughout Thailand to catch the big boys. After that meeting, Colonel Bailey went back to his home in Stockton, California.

Michael and I arranged a meeting with the western headquarters of U.S. Customs in San Francisco. Michael, Colonel Bailey, and I made a deal with them. They agreed to give us \$5,000 to begin our operation. The code name for the operation was "Operation Orion." Michael's code name would be "Terry Fox," mine would be "David Allen" and Colonel Bailey's would be "Steve Austin." The Colonel assured U.S. Customs that he would set up the network and be responsible for it, which he was.

Bailey's motivation to become involved stemmed from two factors. He felt intense guilt for having dumped so much Agent Orange on Vietnam, which ruined countless numbers of lives. He also had a burning desire to be able to get inside the Laotian government, particularly Caisson in Laos. They had information on POWs. Nine of the pilots being held were Colonel Bailey's pilots during Vietnam. The American forces had over 200 air crews go down in Laos, but none of them were recovered. There was a great deal of intelligence on the pilots, but the U.S. didn't have diplomatic relations with Laos. The U.S. government felt the only way to deal with the situation was government to government, which wasn't working. The Colonel believed the only way to accomplish anything was to somehow, some way find someone high enough in the Laotian government who would have information that could be used to free the POWs. That's what he had been working on before he met me, and he explained his reasons to U.S. Customs.

According to Colonel Bailey, there were a lot of drugs coming out of Laos and going through that country from Thailand across Highway Nine to Danang, Vietnam. There were also drugs coming from Burma through Laos from the Golden Triangle. Heroin was coming out of Burma and pot from Laos. Colonel Bailey had spent over ten days on two separate occasions in Burma with Khun Sa, a drug lord. Khun Sa had a 25,000-man army to protect the poppy fields in the Golden Triangle. He was the warlord of the Golden Triangle, and was responsible for the majority of heroin brought into the U.S. at that time. In fact, he was depicted in the movie "American Gangster."

Other than drug smugglers, Bailey was the first American who had ever dealt with Khun Sa. The drug lord was valuable because he was a friend of Kaysone Phomvihane, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the People's Democratic Republic of Laos. Bailey went to Khun Sa to see if he would go to Kaysone Phomvihane and ask to make a deal on the POW information. Khun Sa agreed to that and Bailey recorded Khun Sa's statement on videotape. The colonel was not interested in any recovery fees from drug busts.

Bailey was doing all this in an attempt to get the needed information on MIA's and POW's through drug dealers who were active in Laos and Cambodia. He had known a lot of them during the Vietnam War. The G.I.'s were addicted to the heroin and pot coming out of the Golden Triangle; Laos, Thailand and Myanmar

(formerly Burma). The colonel knew the chief of police and high level officers with the border patrol. He also had close relationships with Thai military intelligence.

I decided to get creative and used money from one of the drug lords to set up my sting. I had a chance to buy Colonel Bailey's boat, the Akuna III, for \$20,000. I made a deal with a Vietnamese drug lord that we would purchase the boat and use it for a mother ship to cruise along the Thai/Vietnamese waters, supplying food, fuel and water so the Thai fishermen could stay out for three to four days without having to waste time going back and forth to sea. We were also to provide protection from the pirates and pick up any boat people who we saw out at sea. That was our deal.

As soon as I purchased the boat with the \$20,000 that came from the drug lord, all my old cronies came out of the woodwork and showed up at the drug lord's house with bottles of champagne, cocaine and fine brandy. My old cronies suggested that we join forces and engage in something more profitable, such as putting the boat to use loading bigger boats in bigger oceans.

While all this was going on, I had met with the resident customs agent at the American Embassy in Bangkok. I did this because I thought I would give the DEA at least a few moments for their money. Besides, they had promised to arrange more cash for me through their people in Bangkok. The resident customs agent knew nothing about me and had no involvement with the drug trafficking side of customs. He did, however, arrange a meeting for me, which took place within a few days.

I came back to a meeting at the agent's office in the embassy. Much to my surprise, there were three DEA agents sitting there. We discussed the events about the Akuna III. I mentioned my film with Colonel Bailey and I gave them numerous names of people I had information on. I told them that that a smuggler known as "Mr. G." had 90 tons of high grade pot stored in a warehouse in Laos, and he was desperate to move it. I supplied the Feds with enough information to enable them to bust the 72 tons that Mr. G. was bringing into Seattle in 1988. I was right about the time and location, but was slightly off on the size of the load. I thought it was going to be 60 tons instead of 72 tons.

At the time I told them about the 60 tons headed for Seattle, they looked at me in disbelief, presuming I was out to scam them for easy money. After it was all said and done, though, every bit of information I had passed on to them turned out to be true. They looked as if they couldn't believe that anyone could do such a big load. It would cost \$700,000 just to purchase the pot, not to mention the boat, payoffs and enormous expenses. As it turned out, \$700,000 was a drop in the bucket compared to the costs Mr. G. and his associates sunk into the project. They had purchased a transport ship for \$3 million and spent another million

outfitting it. The payload consisted of over 8200 packages about the size of a suitcase, weighing about sixty pounds each. At any rate, I left the meeting paranoid. I was asked to get back to them in a few days. Once again, on leaving, they promised no names, dates or places would go into the computer. And once again, they lied about that.

I arrived back at my house in Soi Sananni Comb. I went in and sat down with my friend Mario (the same Mario who had helped me recover my \$100,000 from Will) and told him about the meeting. By this time, Mario was on our side. He asked me the names of the agents who were there at the meeting and as soon as I told him, he flipped out. He said: "One of the agents is on Mr. G.'s payroll! You know him; you met him years ago. You and he did cocaine and Dom Perignon together!" I knew we had rogue agents working for us in the past, but I never realized that I had done coke with any of these rogue government guys.

We were promised 10 percent of the street value of the drugs recovered and 10 percent of any assets seized by Customs. The 72-ton load we helped the DEA and U.S. Customs grab before it got to Seattle had a wholesale value of \$140 million. By rights, my associates and I should have been awarded \$14 million. Customs and DEA reneged on the deal, though. They denied that the information we gave them had anything to do with the bust. They came up with a lame story about the information on the bust coming from other DEA agents. That was an outright lie!

In the first place, they didn't even believe me when I first told them about the magnitude of the load. In the second place, why would they give us the money to track down a load if they were already on to it? The bottom line was that they lied. This was a tremendous disappointment not only for me, but also for Colonel Bailey and all those who had worked so hard with us.

Michael was really pissed off too because he was going to get a cut of it. We actually got on the phone to the head of U.S. Customs in San Francisco. We were standing in Mom's antique store and he said to the man in San Francisco: "If you don't fucking pay us, we're going to go back into the business and you can fuck off!" We were so good at it, that they wouldn't have caught us. It was just a threat made in the heat of anger, though, with no chance of actually happening.

Meanwhile, Colonel Jack Bailey's headaches from the government were not over. During 1991 and 1992, the U.S. government was trying to open up diplomatic relations with Vietnam. They had to have a scapegoat and they chose the Colonel.

Colonel Bailey had testified before a federal grand jury in Washington about the POW issue. Senator John Kerry targeted the Colonel and wanted him to be tried for fraud on his intelligence. The Colonel's lawyer, legendary attorney Melvin

Belli, didn't want him to testify; he wanted him to take the Fifth Amendment. The Colonel insisted on testifying. He made a deal with the U.S Attorney's office to testify before the grand jury provided he was allowed to make an opening statement and a closing statement and could make use of his materials.

The deposition lasted two days and amounted to over 400 pages of testimony. He went before the grand jury and was freed of all charges. During his appearance before the grand jury, the Colonel stated that he was working as an informant. A lawyer from the U.S. Attorney's office asked him: "What was your code name and your mission?"

He gave the lawyer the information. The lawyer then left the room for a brief time and returned. It was obvious that the lawyer was checking up on the Colonel. Colonel Bailey then asked the lawyer if he had confirmed that he had been working for the government during the time in question and that the project was called Operation Orion and his code name was "Steve Austin," the name of the hero in the popular TV series "The Six Million Dollar Man." The Colonel had chosen his code name, and U.S. Customs chose the name "Operation Orion." The lawyer admitted that everything the Colonel said was true.

That didn't change the Colonel's situation, however. He went through a two-year ordeal. His phones were tapped. There were death threats to him and his family. His family was harassed. He went through all of this even though he had served courageously in three wars for America.

All of it was John Kerry's doing and that of John McCain. It is no coincidence that Kerry has ties to Heinz Corporation and McCain's wife is associated with Budweiser, and both firms are global corporations. Colonel Bailey always said that Heinz and Budweiser were salivating at the thought of getting their products into the huge Vietnam market. The irony is that Colonel Bailey had worked closely with McCain's father, Admiral McCain, during the Korean War.

Colonel Jack Bailey is no longer with us. He was a courageous, honorable man who truly loved his country. I wish the same could be said for some of our elected leaders.

As to myself, I have repeatedly been involved with the government over a period of years and repeatedly screwed time after time. It took me a while to learn three things. I learned that the three biggest lies on the world are "I'll love you in the morning like I love you tonight," "The check is in the mail" and "I'm from the government and I'm here to help you."

After having gotten involved with the government wholeheartedly and blindly in order to make an impact on the war on drugs, as well as the war against communist oppression and all the dirt that goes with it, I found I had only been made a fool of. This proves that there is no justice in the system; only a vicious

circle of corruption and greed. There is no justice in America anymore. The government who runs the system is as corrupt and inept and deceitful as any of the drug kingpins. I find myself between a rock and a hard place, thanks to my government and several members of the task force. There are just too many greedy people in the world; and greed is at the root of all evil, most of all the evil within the government.

### **Dad Passes On, I Almost Join Him**

**Mom and Dad had split up in 1979. That was when Dad came to Hawaii with the \$500,000 he had taken from Ron. He gave Mom some of it, but he really didn't divorce her; even though he later obtained some kind of bogus divorce in the Cayman Islands.**

**Dad showed up in Bali with a red head he had used the bogus divorce to marry. Her name was Jan and she reminded me of a fat little pit bull. Dad and Jan settled in Scottsdale, Arizona. She was working for Motorola. Things did not go well in their relationship.**

**Jan patiently waited for the right moment to strike, and then she used all his credit cards to get \$50,000 in cash advances. She packed up all the sterling silver, china, valuables and wedding gifts and took off with a younger man.**

**Dad came to me first. He said: "Jan just left me and took everything. She destroyed me." I didn't do anything for him because there was really nothing I could do.**

**It did not end well for Dad. He moved into a mobile home in Palm Springs. He died of internal bleeding; all alone, with no one at his bedside.**

**There were things about my father that I just didn't like. I didn't like the way he lied about so many things. It was senseless lying. Plus, I also saw that telling a lie put him into the position of having to tell another lie to cover up the original lie. That's how it always works.**

**One of the last times I had seen my father was in Indonesia. He was wearing a phony Congressional Medal of Honor, and he pulled me aside to**

tell me something about the man who was accompanying him. “He thinks I’m a colonel,” Dad said.

I didn’t know what to say. I mumbled and stammered and tried to ask Dad why he had to lie to the man. Why wasn’t my father comfortable enough with who he was to be confident that he would be accepted. If he were so ashamed of the man he was, how did he think that would make me feel? It was just too weird for me. This was in 1999, not long before he passed away.

My dad should have been a lawyer. He would have been the best attorney you could ever imagine. He certainly wasn’t lazy, but I do admit he had a very strong sense of entitlement.

The only faults he had were his problems with stealing and lying; but then again those are two big problems. He had to lie about having gone to college in order to get a job. Once he started telling lies, he had to keep telling lies; and the lies got bigger and bolder. First he was a colonel; then all of a sudden he was a general. It was so embarrassing to Michael and my sister that they couldn’t allow anyone to attend his funeral. They couldn’t even run a full obituary in the paper. I didn’t even know he had died until a few months later, since I was overseas. There wasn’t much I could do. Gayle took care of the funeral arrangements.

After the fiasco with the drug stings, I found myself completely on my own and with a price on my head. I had been accused by some of betraying the drug lords. Life had become awfully dangerous for me. I suffered a broken leg when some Vietnamese guys tried to kill me. Word leaked out that Khun Sa had dispatched eight hit men to scour Thailand for a foreigner known only by a code name, but fitting my description. I was forced to hide out with the prostitutes of Bangkok and the street people living in the slums of Klong Toey. I was there nine months and overstayed on my visa.

While I was staying in the slums of Bangkok, I was sleeping in a little shack with a hooker. It blew my mind when I got up and had to take a piss and I asked her where I could take a leak. She said: “Just go and do it out in the street.” When I walked outside, I saw several people, both men and women, taking a pee or taking a crap. I have learned that the whole business about sanitation is basically a British and American invention; and I don’t think the Brits are nearly as fastidious about bathrooms as we are.

I finally sold the Akuna III for scrap metal. I got \$18,000 and paid all the hookers off that had been feeding me and paid my bills. I moved in to a

room above a bar called Yoni's Night Owl. I stayed there two months and tried to drink myself to death.

It was 2003. I had overstayed my visa, and I was arrested by officials as I wandered aimlessly around Jakarta. I was completely strung out on Xanax and downing booze like water, trying to keep my sanity. And now my friend Demi's brother, Ahmed, was teaching me how to pray.

"Allaahu Akbar. Allaahu Akbar. Bismillaahir-rahmaanir-rahim," I repeated. "God is great. God is great. In the name of God, the most gracious, the most merciful."

I knelt, holding my knees and bowing down to the floor over the top of my prayer rug, and continued: "Allaahu Akbar. Allaahu Akbar."

So began my long journey to hell; a journey of seemingly endless hallucinations that haunt me until this very day. My body was up to the task, but my mental state was too fragile to handle it. I became delusional. I saw angels, demons and ghosts. I heard voices. In the next moment I found myself being interrogated by Indonesian officials. I had been walking around the Korean Embassy, delusional.

They accused me of being high on the drug Ecstasy. I saw a needle on a plate passed before my face and I thought they were going to inject me with truth serum. The next moment, I thought I was onboard a ship coming from Java to Bali. I felt frightened. I had an out of body experience.

It was a bad trip. I remember feeling forever condemned to this nightmare of drug-induced confusion; yet there was a frightening and compelling sense of reality all the same. In some ways, what I sensed proved to be correct.

It was really weird when I finally woke up. I remember seeing a big needle on a plate. They probably injected drugs in me to alter my mood and help them find out who I really was.

According to Christina, a Foreign Service Officer at the U.S. Embassy, the Indonesian police had picked me up in front of the Korean Embassy in Jakarta. Apparently, I had stumbled incoherently amidst the city's three busiest thoroughfares. I had seemingly just traded one hallucinogenic hell for another. I'd soon learn, however, that this hell was all too real.

Indonesia's main immigration office is located in South Jakarta in Jalan Rasuna Said, just past the Australian Embassy in the district of Kuningan. This area is home to the city's central business quarter, as well as encompassing the bulk of Jakarta's skyscrapers, banks, luxury apartments and five-star hotels. Presiding close by are exclusive, diplomat-filled

neighborhoods with tree-lined streets and stately homes; mocking the hot, filthy, crowded bedlam that pervades Jakarta.

It was in Kuningan, just blocks from my old house, that I slowly started to come around and realize that I wasn't on a ship, but rather in the bowels of the immigration building. I was lying on a piece of cardboard on a cold, cement floor. There were four other men in this place with me. We were all detainees in a quite clean, bright, yellow-painted room locked behind a huge, barred door.

Looking around, I saw a few tucked-away, cubby-hole areas with concrete beds, a few squat down, Indo-style floor toilets and a couple of water-filled troughs for bathing. The slightly warm bath water belied the fact that ice-cold air from the building's cooling system was blasting so hard into the room that I intermittently tried and failed to block the vent with pieces of the cardboard. Two high windows at the ground level of the concrete high-rise building showcased a silent movie of feet coming and going, in and out of the main entrance. Occasionally, a throng of children would interrupt the show by pressing their faces against the glass and peering down at us like we were monkeys in a cage.

The Indonesian officials must have stolen my wallet, so whatever I ate I obtained from the other inmates who had cash to pay for food from the blood-sucking old leech who was appointed to keep an eye on us. I couldn't remember the last time I ate, but even the comforting Indonesian take out meal of nasi bungkus (a mound of rice with small tastes of vegetables and meat packed in a folded-over banana leaf) couldn't stave off the wave of sickness that I felt from coming off the Xanax and the drugs that I thought the authorities had injected into me.

My mind was still reeling from the crazy dreams and, try as I might to recount what had really gone down, I just couldn't. At least not right then.

For the next several days, prisoners scheduled to be deported were paraded in and out. Lucky for me, an African guy arrived with a cell phone. Thanks to his generosity, I was able to contact the outside world. I hastily called both my girlfriend Mira and my Dutch friend Rick.

Mira said she was fed up with me and didn't want to help. She was broken and just couldn't handle it. It was over. Rick got in touch with the U.S. Embassy and talked with a Foreign Service Officer by the name of Christina. It wasn't until a few days later that a guard finally summoned me outside the holding room to see the Chief Immigration Officer up on the third floor.

"Assalamu' Alaikum," I humbly greeted the officer. "Peace be with you."

He sneered and proceeded to interrogate me as to the whereabouts of my passport. Thankfully, Christina and her Indonesian assistant were there. My answer was: "I lost it."

It wasn't lost. I had left it, along with a lot of other potential evidence of my overstaying my visa, in a dodgy, one-hundred-dollar-a-month kost (rooming house). I didn't want the authorities to know the particulars about the rented room and then be able to deduce how long I had overstayed my visa. Overstaying a visa is a serious offense in Indonesia. The maximum penalty for overstaying more than sixty days (I had overstayed six months) was five years in jail and a fine of twenty-five million rupiah; or approximately \$2,800 in U.S. money back then. I also owed my boorish landlady a bunch of money and certainly didn't want her to create more pandemonium. So, in the absence of a passport and to prove my identity, I gave the names of three friends and their phone numbers: My New York buddy Alan, who was there in Jakarta, plus my friends Zach and Narayan in the States. Next, Christina had me sign some papers and said to wait to hear from her. I had no idea what was going to happen to me.

Days rolled by and there was no word from Christina. In the meantime, detainees were still coming in and out, and their stories were incredible. Another African guy arrived who said he had status as a totally legal businessman in Indonesia, but that he was being scammed by immigration and extorted for money. The authorities wanted \$10,000 to let him go, so I figured they must have had something on him. He said they didn't, and by the tired but convicted look in his eyes, I believed him. There was an older guy from Singapore who insisted that he had been turned in by his wife so that she could steal his fleet of fishing boats from him; a scenario I thought was most probably true as well. And then there was a very young black kid from Mali who I'll never forget. He was fifteen years old and had presumably come to Indonesia on a tiny fifteen-foot boat with six refugee women in search of a better life. While maritime piracy is a continual problem in Indonesian waters, it is usually targeted at commercial vessels. I was surprised to hear the young boy's gruesome story. He told of how the little boat was attacked by pirates and all six women onboard were killed by gunfire. He evidently dove overboard during the melee and swam until a small fishing boat picked him up three miles off the coast of Aceh, a city in the northernmost province of the Indonesian island of Sumatra. He showed me pictures of his nameless, hero-fisherman and as a survivor. All he could do was smile and talk about his dream of becoming a famous soccer player.

He was very tall and blacker than any black person I had ever seen. My young friend received some money via FedEx from relatives he had in

Paris, and he was promptly picked up by an African official wearing brightly colored African robes. I happened to be sitting in the office when the African Embassy officer arrived, and the boy was still all smiles. All he could do was say: “Football, football, I love football! I want to be football star!” I often wonder what he thought a little over a year later in 2004 when Aceh, where he was brought to safety, was one of the cities nearest the Indian Ocean epicenter of the 9.3 magnitude earthquake which triggered the tsunamis responsible for claiming over 200,000 lives. “LUCKY!” is what I thought. He was one lucky young kid.

Late one evening about seven days after I had arrived, two Indonesian immigration officials unexpectedly announced that all present were scheduled to be transferred to what I had heard was a real hell hole. All I could think was: “Oh my God, where’s Christina! What’s with the Embassy?”

I immediately reached for an Islamic prayer rug that someone had left behind (it was a funny thing because it was exactly like the rug Mira had given me a few years back). At that time, the detention space was occupied by me, the Chinese guy from Singapore, a Taiwanese man who had just been picked up by Interpol for who knows what crimes he had committed, the young man from Mali, an Indian who was insane and went by the name of “Jim Morrison” and a Turkish fellow named Cash who had just served two years for credit card scams and was being deported.

As we piled into an old, junky minivan, the handcuffed Taiwanese tried, but failed, to convince me to help him jimmy the van’s door so that we could escape. Since I was hand cuffed to him I freaked out when he kept jiggling the door handle that was unlocked. We were all crammed in the back, it was pouring a relentless monsoon and the roads were a mess. It didn’t take a genius to figure out that if someone did try to beat it, they wouldn’t get far. I finally nudged the asshole and told the guy to chill out and he stopped. All I needed at that point was to be shot trying to escape in a monsoon storm while handcuffed to some Taiwanese convict!

About two hours later, our destination came vaguely into view through the dark storm-beaten windows. It appeared to be only a house from the front, but opened into a good sized building. Several Indonesian guards came out and told us where to stand, and after over an hour of standing there listening to the sounds of screaming and yells from the floor above, as if people were being tortured, they started to assign us “rooms” that were more like something you’d keep a monkey or a pig in. It was a scene right out of Midnight Express. The room had shit, blood and feces all over the

walls, with big iron bars to keep us from escaping. Plus, there were mosquitoes everywhere!

Cash and I were placed in one cell. The rest of our group was put in separate hellholes that were all side-by-side. The air smelled of piss and shit, and it was fucking scary.

Our cell was about a meter wide and three or so meters long. At the back end of it was a crap-filled toilet with feces everywhere around the top and edges. There were ravenous mosquitoes and flies buzzing just over the top of the piss that remained in the toilet. There were no clean water cups, only some filthy plastic aqua bottles that we filled with murky water. We did our best to clean the former inmate's blood and feces from the walls and floor, but it was practically hopeless without the proper supplies. After a few hours, they came around with a hose that had about a pound of water pressure. Water was barely dribbling out from the end, but at least we could use it to clean off a place to sleep on the floor. I took off my trousers and used my only pair of underwear to clean the floor.

After the floor dried, I laid down on the Islamic prayer rug I had found in the other detention center in Kuningan and brought along with me. Ravenous mosquitoes swarmed everywhere, sweat rolled off my body and the air was totally still because there was no circulation. I found it very difficult just to breathe. With the exception of my prayer rug and his cell phone, Cash and I only had the clothes on our backs.

It was late at night, and we craved sleep, but it was no use trying to get some rest. There were about a hundred black African detainees who screamed and cried all night, while others sang black African hymns until the morning mercifully dawned; ushering in the meager excuses for breakfasts we were served. All we received on our plates were one egg white each and some cold white rice, no water, not a thing to drink.

I learned that many of my fellow detainees had been there for years. There were also many refugees from Iran who were simply waiting for another country to accept them. One beaten-down Iranian in his early thirties gravely warned me that if I didn't get out within the first few days, I could very well settle in there for the long haul, go to court and be sent to prison on the penal island of Nusa Kambangan off Java's southern coast. It was the very place from where my roommate Cash had just been released from after he had spent two years for credit card scams.

The situation became more stressful when the older Chinese guy from Singapore got sick and died in his cell, presumably of heart trouble, and I watched them carry his remains out on a stretcher. I thought about his evil

Indonesian wife and the corrupt immigration officials who were part of her scam to steal all his fishing business and the Indian guy who had already been there for years being tossed from place to place without knowing what his real identity was. All he would do was talk about being the reincarnation of Jim Morrison. I thought about my cousin, Adlai Stevenson. When he was U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. under President Kennedy, he supported the eventual Indonesian assumption control of Western New Guinea from the Netherlands in 1963. I thought about my father who fought the Japanese in World War II in the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya. I thought about all my so-called friends and family and all the people I had helped during the years I had been there. My "Gold Pass" had seemingly just expired, and I thought: "Damn! Here I am a prisoner in the very country that should be thanking me." But most of all, I thought about Ashley, and I knew I had to get out. Everything else started to fade into the background until nothing else mattered.

Ashley's image returned to my mind again and again until I finally heard the echoing sounds of my own screams. I was shouting: "GET ME OUT OF HERE NOW! DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM? MY NAME IS SCOTT ADLAI STEVENSON! SOMEONE CALL AND GET ME OUT NOW!"

I yelled so loud that everyone in the place must have heard me, but no one answered in reply. I began to fall into total despair.

Luckily, the Turkish guy had a girlfriend who he said would be bringing us food the following day, and he told me not to worry. He said: "Don't worry. We'll get out of here. Allah will get us out."

If it weren't for Cash, the Turkish guy, I might have perished from malnutrition or simply gone crazy. He was a nice guy; tall, well-built and very reassuring. You could tell he was a bit of a scammer and knew his way around the street. He told me about his ventures in Jakarta with identity theft and about his stay in the worst prison in Indonesia. He told me that he had an okay stay because he had a bit of money and his girl, who was most likely a Jakarta hooker, used to take care of him in prison. In Indonesia, if you have money and are incarcerated, you can still live like a king. It's all about paying for what you want. You can get anything: Hookers, any kind of drugs, booze, cigarettes, Internet, cell phones, DVD players and in some cases, even get out for the night!

For two harrowing weeks, I had been detained in a horrific jail where two out of five men who entered with me were removed on stretchers. Eventually, Christina came through and before her arrival at the jail, the big chief of the prison came and they brought me and few of the other guys to his office. He ordered us all some nasi bunkus (a bunch of rice topped with

spicy beef and vegetables) with a side of sambal chili, all wrapped in banana leaves, and we were given some bottled water. He was preparing me for the arrival of the American Embassy officials and didn't want them to think we were unfed and mistreated.

He was all smiles and asked me where I was from. When I said "California," his eyes opened wide and he said: "Ah, great! I have a son in California, Los Angeles. He is there studying at the university."

I replied: "Oh, how nice. I am also from Los Angeles. Why don't you give me his address and I'll go visit him and tell him we met." But in the back of my mind, I was thinking: "I'll go visit him and kick his ass out of America or better yet, put a hole through his brains with a .357 Magnum!" The prison chief actually wrote his son's name and address down, but, naturally, after I arrived home I never followed up on that promise.

After Christina showed up, Christina, her assistant and I, along with one of the immigration pigs, all got into an official embassy car and we all departed for Soekarno Hata International Airport. I was very nervous that something might go wrong. There could have been some snag or some unforeseen crap that might have come up.

We arrived at the airport and a certain immigration guy kept giving me dirty looks. I felt like decking him and spitting on the scoundrel. You could tell he was itching to get some duit (payoff) but little did he know that I didn't have a damn dime. Christina assured me everything would be all right, but she could see I was nervous and starting to sweat. We took a table at the McDonald's on the lower level and she handed me a brand new U.S. passport with a photo that Mira had found and cut to size. It was an official credential that was a twelve-day temporary passport, good only for transport home. She then gave me a one-way ticket and \$50 to get me through the airport in Hong Kong and keep me in food until my arrival in the U.S. Once I landed in the States, I was to be picked up by some people from social services and taken to a homeless shelter.

Finally, my flight was called and it was time to check in and pass through immigration. Christina and her staff walked me through the baggage check and handed the immigration scoundrel the ticket and passport, and he checked me in. What probably hurt him the most was that he had to do it all for free. There was no chance of his shaking me down for a bribe with Christina along, but if he could have, he would have surely taken that last fifty dollars.

Christina and her assistant then wished me well and said "Goodbye." They left me with the vulture. My heart began to pound. I was thinking: "This

**guy is finally going to work me over for what little cash Christina had given me.”**

**He took me into a little side office before passing through the immigration counter and there were several immigration officials haggling over duit (payoffs). I was sweating and starting to look obviously nervous. One of the top guys gave me a dirty look I would have liked to have shoved down his throat, but I restrained myself to avoid any more time in jail. He took my passport, stamped it and said: “You name Scott Mohammad Stevenson. You Muslim?”**

**I replied: “Yes.”**

**He slowly handed me my passport back and said: “Go, you’re late for your flight. You don’t want to be late and miss it, or we may have to put you back in immigration jail!”**

**He smiled, let out an evil sort of laugh, opened the door for me and off I went. I was still escorted by the vulture, though, and he took me all the way to the gate before he disappeared into the crowd of people boarding the flight.**

**I got on the flight, still nervous, but feeling a bit safer. The Cathay Pacific 747 taxied down the runway and flew off into the late afternoon sky. I looked out the window and could see the flooded rice terraces below as the plane cut through the clouds. All the while, I was holding back my tears and trying to hide my sorrow from the passengers next to me. I was feeling tired, broken, but free.**

## **AFTERWORD**

**I once had a need to answer a seemingly perpetual question: “What should my next move be?” For most of my life, finding the answer to that question was my driving force. Even in recent times, I have been constantly shifting from place to place, relying on the kindnesses of friends. At this moment, I am standing next to a pay phone in front of the Luther Burbank Home and Gardens in Santa Rosa, California. I have on a pair of flip flops, an old vintage Aloha shirt and a pair of baggy shorts, all of which I found in a pile at the Sam Jones Shelter for the homeless. I fumble in my pocket for my last \$10 pre-paid phone card and quietly prepare to call my co-author, to finish the telling of my story.**

It has only been lately that I have regarded myself as even somewhat introspective. When it comes to telling people about my experiences in far off lands, I have never let privacy or pride get in the way. I've always been honest in telling my tales to others. I'm willing to risk offending some people who have been part of the journey and I have often demeaned myself along the way. I have had some incredible experiences and there were extraordinary factors that pushed me down specific roads, but I had always chosen to believe that I just happened to be along for the ride. All I wanted to do was to have a great time without hurting anyone, and it simply ended in an unfortunate sort of miserable confusion. I stumbled from one scam to another and never once dreamed that it would constitute my body of work and serve as the story of who I really am.

As a result, it has only been in hindsight that I can talk about what it has all meant and what I've learned. I'd like to say that I can trace the majority of my troubles to the fact that I did not really have a childhood. I've wondered if my adult life could have been anything different than it turned out to be, considering my dysfunctional family. My life has been a strange maze of both circumstance and choice; and my choices, many of which I regret, have been matters of intention, chance, skill and incompetence. And based upon the choices I made, you can call me a dreamer, a fool, a scoundrel or a decent, caring human being. I have, after all, been many different people along the way; and that is something that I have had to accept as well.

So, standing here without an ounce of self-pity, I think that, on one level, telling this story has been a way of putting it all behind me and is perhaps a way of getting it out and over with. Nevertheless, it has also helped me to discover who I am. It is no longer "Where do I go next?" but "Where am I coming from?" and "Where do I want to be?" And for sure, however my journey ends, I will be someone better than I was yesterday. The reality is that there is no paradise for scoundrels: They all get it in the end.