



The Young, Restless and Desperate of the OC

Kurt von Schleicher's Story

I was born in Southern California at the Glendale Memorial Hospital at 2:08 pm. Several babies arrived there that day. I'm a boomer—it was an afternoon on a Friday in 1958. Of course I was too young to remember much of what was going on for a couple years, but my parents related to me how it was quite a time to be alive. That was when guys like Frank Sinatra, and Jerry Lee Lewis were singing and rockin' the roof off in large scale music venues. Elvis Presley was too, but he was also inducted into the Army in '58.

I remember watching *Father knows Best*, *Leave It to Beaver* and *I Love Lucy* in black and white. We'd even drive by Lucy's home on occasion—it wasn't that far away. Our own home was not as peaceful as their TV homes were. Ours was kind of like a broken home that wouldn't quite fully break. Lots of loud parties, lots of beer drinking and some fights that grew pretty intense (I later learned to start many of them).

Ike was the top man in the White House that year. Pulitzer Prize winning American novelist and short story teller, Ernest Hemingway, was also at the top of his game goin' for it in literary world. *Toyota* and *Datsun* (a.k.a. Nissan) went on sale in the USA, *NASA* was formed, the Microchip was made by *Intel*, and the *Wham-O* company introduced and sold over



100 million Hula Hoops that year. I personally owned one along with a Frisbee, but I couldn't make either of them go very well. Bill and Mark Richards in the town where I'd graduate (Dana Point) invented the first skateboard in '58. How? They basically attached skinny rollerskate wheels to a square wooden board and then sold them at their *Val Surf Shop* for \$8 each.

What else happened? Well, *Kellogg's* introduced Cocoa Krispies (45.9% sugar) and *General Mills* intro-ed Cocoa Puffs (containing 43% sugar). No wonder so many of us boomers became majorly hyper and warped! This was a time when a fast-food meal could be purchased for a nickel and the price of a 1st class US postage stamp went up to 4¢. *AMEX*

introduced a charge card and *Bank of America* introduced their BankAmericard which later became the Visa card ...to kick off some good ole American debt. Who could imagine living without that? Did you know that the first domestic jet-airline passenger service was started by *National Airlines* between New York City and Miami in '58? Wow!—how in the world was I so privileged to arrive in America at a time when so much was playing out?

People were watching stars like James Dean and Marilyn Monroe on the silver screen at the movies back then. Watching TV at home was also happening in '58—more than 45 million American households had these large wooden boxes with big hot tubes inside and rabbit ears on top, and some people would even affix tin foil to them for better reception. I remember watching black and white television shows like: *Candid Camera*, *The Ed Sullivan Show*, *The Jack Benny Show* and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*.



My [family](#), for all practical purposes was a proper churchgoing tribe—we hardly ever missed a Sunday ever. When I was a child, I guess you could say that we were somewhat religious folk, hoping to somehow earn some points with “*the Man upstairs*.” I sure wanted to go to this place that I’d heard a little about called, Heaven, and I wondered if our family’s sterling attendance record would count for anything upon our arrival. Surely good intentions and keeping most of the “rules” would help. I had real good timing in bell-ringing as a faithful altar boy dressed in black and white vestments too—maybe that would gain me some favor.



We were far from perfect.

Rascals [we were](#), but my brothers and I where out to make the most of every single day! If we were clever, we might be able to stay home from church and watch TV a few days a year ...if we could just look pale and pathetic. We’d have to lie real good, cough with a straight face and act weak and sick enough. I know because I succeeded at this a few times, but somehow I also knew (erroneously) that if God graded on a curve, we’d all squeeze past Peter and in through those pearly gates.

One morning after arriving home from Montrose Elementary Kindergarten on November 22, in 1963 at 10:30, I was shocked by a nationwide tragedy that was unfolding before our very eyes.

You know how kids used to safely walk a couple blocks to and from the school house alone back then. Well I had just got home, and entered through our open front door for it was warm and balmy out—this was when we lived on

Collin's Lane, before we moved to our home on Los Olivos Lane in La Crescenta ...and I happened to catch the TV footage as my mom sat there stunned in her chair across the living room. They were showing how some loony gunman took down our President, John F. Kennedy, on the south end of Elm Street in Dealey Plaza in Dallas. With my young mind I was trying my best to comprehend what just happened. How could someone assassinate our



46 year old leader while he was riding in his presidential motorcade like that? How terrifying! I was mainly picking up on the mood and astonishment of them moment that came from my mom's reaction.

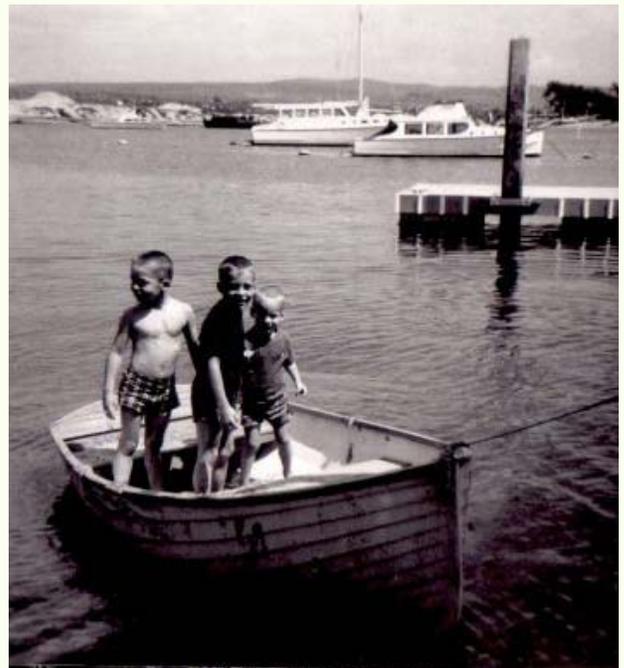
Where was this age of innocence evaporating to? Life had been very gentle as I had known it thus far. Was our serene white picket fence American dream passing away with this tragedy? I couldn't form the sentences to discuss or explain what I felt of course, but how could our great Land turn into such a cold, cruel and ruthless place so quickly I thought.

Later there were other dreadful misfortunes that happened as well. For instance, America's pop star, Elvis, saw his depressing demise. James Dean got himself killed in a bad car wreck. And what were barbiturates?—they were saying that Marilyn Monroe overdosed on some. Bobby Kennedy was also assassinated and buried. Who knew that he would follow in the footsteps of his older brother?

Would life ever be good again?

There was actually a whole lot that Americans could be truly thankful for. Ours is one of the most blessed countries in the entire world. My siblings and I—we were really proud of my mom who was continuously upbeat and fun-loving. She seemed forever young and vivacious; a real extrovert entertainer at social events. She was always there for us too.

I'm grateful for how God kept blessing us—we somehow survived the 50's, 60's and 70's together! It's interesting all that kids of my era survived from, being born to teenage mothers who actually smoked, drank, danced and were concerned about their husbands who did more of the same. Can you just imagine? Our mom's took aspirin, ate blue cheese dressing, tuna from a can, and didn't use any sunblock,



sunscreen or tanning foam. They didn't even get tested for diabetes or for high cholesterol. We kids were put to sleep sucking on our thumbs and blankies ...on our tummies in baby cribs covered with bright colored lead-based paints. We had no childproof lids on any medicine bottles, doors or cabinets and when we exited the house at will through the unlocked screen door to go ride our red Schwinn bikes with white striped fenders, or our skateboards with clay wheels ...we had no Styrofoam helmets on. Not to mention the risks we took while jumping off the roof with a white bed sheet as a parachute, or onto the trampoline to do a flip into the pool, or while riding side by side in the washer on spin dry, or in the dryer while burning our hair or later while hitchhiking with our surfboards to the beach and back.

We said yes, Sir and yes Ma'am when spoken too. We bowed our heads and prayed out loud for the government leaders in school. When we mouthed-off to our parents, we kids would get our mouths washed out with ivory soap; or with Tide detergent if we said the "D" word. Delayed obedience was treated like disobedience and we got spankings when we forgot our chores. It wasn't a perfect time—it was a different time. It was when boys wore their blue jean britches as high as their waist and they had huge single cuffs at the bottom. Most ladies were modest and covered themselves up appropriately and the men opened doors for them without blaming them for their problems. That was sure good.

People took responsibility for their own feelings, thoughts, words and actions. Yup, they owned up to it when they did wrong, felt sorry for it, and quickly apologized. Many would actually make full restitution to the injured party without being forced to or asked to. A handshake or a promise meant something—words meant something. Right was right and wrong was wrong. There was a love and respect for God, country and those in authority.

It was the dads who led their families and their wives followed them for the most part. Dad's weren't denigrated in the media. Everything a dad did wasn't looked at as stupid because most of it never was. During courtship, a wise young man with hat in hand formally introduced his friend to his parents and they all would have a meal together. He would obey his date's parents and abide by their house rules. He'd ask for their advice and listen to all four parents, even if they were the worst heathens in the world. There were valid ethics to be honored, so he would ask for permission to propose to his date. Lovers didn't shack-up together, and if someone got pregnant out of wedlock there was going to be a wedding. It was because people didn't feel "entitled" like the world or someone owed them something. They had a sense of duty about them. They didn't have a me-first mentality. And when lovers married they moved out of their parent's home and they struggled some, but they paid their own bills. They didn't kill millions of unwanted babies through abortion, because that has always been seriously wrong and evil. People took care of each other—especially the weaker ones.

As infants and children, we rode around in long heavy-duty cars. Those vehicles were built like space rockets with wing foils and weighty iron bumpers with big bullets protruding out. Some had wood on the sides, but no car seats were inside of them; no booster seats, no headrests, no seat belts, no air bags—people just bounced and flew around when they hit something. Parents would put their free arm out to hold everyone back in their seat when they came to a sudden stop. Passengers were not protected and that was a bad thing, because lots of people died. But riding in the back of a four wheel drive pick-up truck along with the hairy dog that had its nose stuck out into the oncoming wind, on a warm day after

swimming in a lake for hours was always a special treat! And I loved stopping in La Canada to get vanilla *Frosties* dunked in hot liquid chocolate.

We breathed pure brown L.A. smog daily and hacked all afternoon. We drank water from the garden hose and not from a bottle. We played capture the flag and sardines. We fell into poison oak bushes and then watched the itchy bumps rise up all over our arms for days.

We shared one soft drink with five friends, from one soda bottle. You could eventually return that bottle and get paid for it, and no one actually died from all this. We sometimes stole doughnuts from my dad's staff meetings. We ate cupcakes, white bread, real butter and drank Kool-aid made with lots of sugar in it, but we weren't overweight because, we were always outside riding bikes and playing!

During the summer when not at camp, we kids would leave home in the morning and play all day, just as long as we were back home when it got dark out. No one was able to reach us all day. They were O.K. with it and we were too. Mom made dinner and we all sat down together. Sometimes we would spend long hours building our plastic model planes or building our go-carts out of scrap-wood in the garage, and then we'd ride down the highest hill we could find, only to discover that we forgot to put on shoes or add a brake stick. After scraping our knees or running into hedges and other bushes a few times, we learned to solve that problem. We rode our red steel Radio Flyer Wagon downhill fast and crashed as well. I remember climbing a hundred foot antenna tower with my brothers. Once we climbed a billboard just to jump off from thirty feet high into a large bush below as we were all protected by the cardboard box armor we wore. The branches would tear holes though this armor too. We did not have Playstations, Nintendo Wii games or X-boxes. We didn't have any video games that would swallow up all of our free hours. We didn't have 150 satellite or cable TV channels to watch. We didn't have any video movies or DVD's, no surround-sound or CD's, no cell phones, no personal computers, or MP3s, or iPods or Internet, or dangerous chat rooms. We had face-to-face friendships and we went outside down the block and knocked on doors or rang doorbells, because that's where we found our friends! Sometimes we just walked right into a house and talked to our friends in the kitchen and together got into their fridge for lunch. We speak to their parents when spoken to. We would look at their parents in the eyes, smile, listen politely and even shake hands with the dads to introduce ourselves if we didn't know them yet!

Sometimes they would ask us to come back later if they were busy, but not very often because they would make us part of their family when we were there. My family did the same for them. When we did something nice to become a friend to new kids, we would end up with new friends. It just worked out that way.

Many of us fell out of tree forts when the rope wasn't tied off well. We got cut, we broke bones and we chipped teeth and there were no lawsuits filed from all these accidents. I remember getting my hand stuck in a 25 pound adding machine, but the kind firemen at the firehouse with a Philips head screwdriver and a pry-bar liberated me. We ate worms, certain leaves and mud pies made from real dirt. My brother once ate a living garden snail, but none of these slimy creatures lived inside us forever. We played with BB guns and shot our neighbors window full of holes and then we had to save up and pay for a new one. And we created new games with clothes hangers, superman-like capes. My bothers and I fought crime around the block as the infamous "Blue Whip-ers." We made games with sticks that

had ropes tied to them. We invented games with tennis balls and golf balls. I personally carved the golf balls that I found just to see all the rubber bands inside. Ouch!—I cut myself, get a bloody finger and then my mom would make a homemade butterfly bandage because it was cheaper than the doctor's stitches! And, although we were told it would happen, we did not put out many eyes from all those sticks we saw as swords, but many tall weeds on vacant lots died as we slashed them to pieces.

How cruel—some kids got cut from the team!

Sometimes there were football, track or Little League *tryouts* and not everyone who went out for the team, made the team. They'd cry like little girls too. Some even cussed and stomped their feet. Those who got cut from the team had to grow up, get over it, and learn how to deal with disappointment like big boys. When I was in the third grade, I got caught stealing this green sour apple bubble gum from the liquor store right before going to church class after public school on a Monday. The man at the counter grabbed a hold of me and yanked me over the counter. He pinned me up against the wall, yelled fiercely at me with his big finger wagging in my face; he then threatened me and guess what. My parents actually sided with the store keeper and the law that day! My dad swatted me hard at home—it stung bad, but then he gave me a work detail and made me go apologize to that man. And it healed me from stealing and made me better prepared for that dull church class with the nuns. The idea of a parent bailing any of us kids out through all those decades if we broke the law was totally unheard of!

We had some forms of freedom. We could experience failure, success and responsibility firsthand, and we somehow learned how to deal with it all.

And of course we all wanted to emulate my dad, who taught us to be dependable, disciplined and honest. He was a tough respected football coach and strong leader with ambition. He was a busy, hardworking man's kind of man—a real adventurer and a good disciplinarian. We kids both loved and feared him in a positive sort of way. He was the *Tom Sawyer Day Camp* director.

This respected camp establishment among other American camps held up a standard. It was certainly a kid-friendly resident camp for boys and girls. My grandfather Bill founded this business in 1926 in Laguna Beach and it benefited literally hundreds of rich and poor children who would attend it all year around. Sissy mama's boys grew up to be men there. Small little girls dressed in red and white also learned responsibility and turned into esteemed ladies there, as together we all learned good family values, sportsmanship and how to work hard. Growing up at the camp year after year was so ideal for the business stewarded forty horses that we could ride daily. These horses were bought from the Santa Anita race track and they were young and fast. Zero saddles and sometimes kids would get bucked off. Sometimes they would get their shirts green when they were dunked in an algae-filled horse watering trough.

We kids climbed big thick oaks to build big tree forts. We explored, had bonfires and we even enjoyed all-out mud fights. I recall climbing railroad bridges to jump off with a rope, and huge rock formations at Vasquez Rocks Natural Park. We climbed everything we could find even reservoirs to jump off of them into the clean lakes and rivers below at different locations. It was fun to go swimming and play water sports with our friends for hours until

our hair turned white or green—until our eyes turned bloodshot. My siblings and buddies were always active in other sports as well, and we explored deep bat-filled caves pretty often in the desert near Mexico. It was radically exciting for a kid—we developed agility and stamina. Computers and junk food weren't stealing all our time. As the owner's kids, my brothers and I took part in everything with enthusiasm! Talk about constant exercise, we went hiking and camping all over southern and northern California ...free of charge and we received special undeserved treatment from several parents who would have us over to their huge homes on the bay or elsewhere. Yes, we felt important at Tom Sawyer Camp, but our parents were careful to treat all the camp kids the same. We really felt appreciative inside that they were like that too. Boy, just to be a part of it all was over the top exhilarating! Yes, it was a total privilege that was fun-filled with lots of challenges and daring all night adventures.

Let me tell you more about my hero—my dad, Rodney Kim. He is an ex-frat guy from UCLA who to this day, loves to keep in touch with his alumni-friends. Yes, allow me tell you a little more about him. He has always been a diligent smart worker, but it was in college that he really learned to be industrious, to play hard and unfortunately to drink hard just like all his buds did. Some of them would come with us from time to time, on short family camping trips out at the Colorado River. They were loyal to each other and we all spent a lot of time out there basking in the hot sun, hanging out and water skiing.

What else did we do? Well, we went to Mexico for camping annually—my dad always loaded up a trailer of clothes at Christmas time to take to the poor and they invited us to celebrate the birth of Jesus by throwing firecrackers and M-80s there. I blew up my hand once by not releasing fast enough. I also joined the iron man's club by eating raw eggs and skinny-dipping in the cold river during winter time. Sometimes I'd hurl.

We all loved relaxing together at the ocean the best. I remember the aroma of Coppertone suntan lotion on my shoulders, and the beautiful smell of white gardenia flowers in my mom's hair. Her name was Elizabeth but everyone called her Betty. I fondly remember the smell of that cool salty Laguna Beach breeze as we would often drive down to visit my aunt Ida who moved there from England. Her family built a home near the coast highway when it was only a dirt road. Sometimes we visited the Becks who were my wonderful grandparents that lived in neighboring Newport Beach. I remember us boys taking my grandparents motorboat over to Catalina Island for a weekend of exploring with grandpa John as the captain. Man, my grandmother could cook too. It was so nice to camp in that boat with the waves gently rocking you back and forth at night and it's hard to describe the sound of those waves lapping up against the hull when you wake up in the morning. Later on with my aunt Barbara—who had a boyfriend at the time—my brothers and I sailed over to that island and back seeing whales, sharks and blue flying (gliding) fish. The ocean and our relatives were so much a part of our lives—how could we ever forget.

A dog; man's best friend?—mine was!

Let me tell you a bit about my dog. Have you ever had a pet that you went and did everything with? I had a beloved German Shepherd named, Blitzen who was my best friend for years. I would even go out in the backyard in the evenings, sit down on the steps and talk things over with Blitzen; especially when I felt down. I knew he couldn't understand what I was saying, but he like the attention and kept everything confidential. We went to the

beach together, but Blitzen would lap up the saltwater and barf. We went hiking and climbing mountains together and had great times far away from civilization and everyone. He loved to swim in the Colorado River too for hours. He didn't have all his teeth. Some were chipped up, because he loved to chase, catch or retrieve big rocks and sticks that the camp kids would throw into the water. I guess I was a terrible caretaker. At the end of the normal camp day when all the camp kids would break to take off running to their respective busses to go home in, our dog Blitzen loved to run after them and tackle a few. It sounded ferocious and scared the life out of the kids. I was supposed to hold him back by his choker chain, but he was so huge and would often tow me away on my belly or just break free. He was the best camp dog. He got lost a few times, but we had quite a time floating a hundred miles down river to Mexico together on railroad tie rafts that we built every year at Easter time. That's how us lost people celebrated the resurrection of Christ. It was the best way we knew how.

We did lots of journeying. I recall mule-packing up in the Sierra Nevada Mountains for a couple weeks; living on delicious trout that we had fished for daily the entire time. We'd let the pack animals go and graze each night and then go look for them in the morning. We would also catch snakes, turtles and ugly tarantulas.

For a time our family had some rattlesnakes and scorpions in an aquarium in our living room. We thought it was cool when some white mice would get eaten by our reptiles. We caught a lot of creatures on these trips and yes, many of the smaller creatures we actually took to school in a cigar box for show and tell. I made a lot of friends that way. I've been blessed with all kinds of pets—a pet skunk named, Thumper, who would thump on the floor of his cage when he was hungry for cottage cheese. I had an abandoned sea gull who adopted me, and a baby sea lion that I kept out in our backyard. He would sun himself on top of the dog house and he enjoyed it when I'd take him out on walks in the park where the pool was.

Let me tell you more about the early '60's.

Things got a little wilder but the Schleicher-party rolled on, so to speak. Our church services rolled on, the football games played on, the domestic squabbles and fights rolled on, and the Olympia beer caps popped off. Beer was plentiful and the drinking grew worse at my home. I'm sure there were other homes where it was more plentiful in Southern California. But my dad would go into a blackout sometimes calling my mom, Sam. I didn't know what that meant, but it caused my mom a lot of grief and fear. I know my dad never wanted a boring life; who does? He wanted joy, excitement and a pure form of pleasure.¹ I also know he would never have started drinking if he knew in advance where it would lead ...and what a mess and a cruel prison it would create for him.

One time my mom secretly stole us kids away in the night. It was to protect us by leaving my dad, as we went to live in Pasadena in The Haven House (a home for the hurting families of alcoholics). We were quite a distance away from home and we all hoped against hope for a change in him. My siblings and I missed my dad a lot and we prayed that he would quit drinking soon, so that we could return home and so that life could somehow gain some level of normalcy. The fact was this: we knew how to say our prayers, but we didn't know how to pray, we knew a little bit about the Lord historically but we didn't know the Lord. We were merely unregenerate churchgoers.

I can relate to the following message that an ex-drunk once sent to columnist Ann Landers:

*We drank for happiness and became unhappy.
We drank for joy and became miserable.
We drank for sociability and became argumentative.
We drank for sophistication and became obnoxious.
We drank for friendship and made enemies.
We drank for sleep and awakened without rest.
We drank for strength and felt weak.
We drank "medicinally" and acquired health problems.
We drank for relaxation and got the shakes.
We drank for bravery and became afraid.
We drank for confidence and became doubtful.
We drank to make conversation easier and slurred our speech.
We drank to feel heavenly and ended up feeling like hell.
We drank to forget and were terrifyingly haunted.
We drank for freedom and became slaves.
We drank to erase problems and saw them multiply.
We drank to cope with life and invited death.²*

For us it was kind of cool that we didn't have to go to school for a couple weeks, but we weren't happy at all. Then guess what—a miracle finally happened in spite of our ignorance and "lostness"—my dad got sober as he would go to AA meetings daily. Yeah a thousand times I whispered! To me that was much better than playing hooky from school. We were so glad to reunite with him too, because dads on the bottle often don't ever make it off the bottle.

My mom ditched my dad a couple times as the years went by—it was kind of scary. Our world was turned upside down when that happened and I didn't know what would happen to all the people that meant so much to me. She said it was because of the behavior of a *dry drunk*, whatever that was suppose to mean. Sure they fought some off and on, but what parents didn't? I didn't know about the details of all that stuff either, or the intricacies of their complex marriage relationship.



I became very distracted and discouraged at school, as well as a poor student consistently achieving "D"s on my report cards. I felt like how can this Math or English class fix our titanic-sized familial strife and yelling problems? I started to feel so disillusioned and I quickly tired of the whole domestic alcoholic scene... for quite a time ...that was until I later became a teenager and started partying hardy myself.

Yep, due to some bad choices that I made in the area of choosing the wrong close friend—who were full-blown rebel-fools—that I could unfortunately relate to, I found myself way off

kilter. Yes, buzzed, loaded, self-medicated, voluntarily and destructively sedated right in the middle of the free-love hippie era. I guess I wanted the pain gone at any cost! Those years were like a cloudy haze—a dizzy nightmare spinning with instability and insecurity. It was such a lame delinquent existence; one that I had earlier promised myself I would never get involved with. HOW DID I END UP WITH A WORSE VERSION OF MY FATHER'S LIFE? I alone was to blame and certainly wasn't proud of myself for doing things the way I did. I deep down knew I really despised myself and my existence! Sure I'd rationalize things by saying, "Hey, I'm aching inside and really hurting no one but myself" but it simply wasn't true. I was hurting others too.

It was a quest for peace at any price that I was on. Have you ever felt restless, desperate and unfulfilled with a massive hole in your heart—a void inside so big that a semi truck could drive through it? It was a dangerous, extended experience—my teen years were. Rock stars were becoming our heroes and we wanted to find the same acceptance, enlightenment and excitement that they were finding. My dad didn't want us kids watching those four mop-top lads from Liverpool—the Beatles, on our home TV. Most of the parents I knew felt like that about these British entertainers. Who knew they'd soon be larger than life as four minstrel troubadours; pied piper guides of a whole wandering generation, playing the sound track of our drug-induced, peace-craving lives that seemed so very in vain?

Then came the wild '70's!

In the '60's we enjoyed some very pleasant years together at the beach but after that we all became more separated from each other. The decade of the 70's were quickly upon us in a heart beat, and we boys were now growing long hair, to emulate several of these Rock and Roll artists that we looked up to. Some of my friends even played in garage bands by this time. Several had completely bailed from their homes, some of them literally lost their minds on acid and others of this milieu tragically never even made it out of their teen years alive. I remember attending their funerals too. The private beach club parties and bashes in posh gated communities increased... the guzzling of Mickey Big Mouth beers on the top of the point ...and on Top of the World a Laguna location overlooking the sea increased. We would surf until 11:00 pm if there was a full moon and then sleep overnight in the sand only to watch the morning waves breaking and go do it all again. My all over the road, loaded driving increased... the skateboarding of half pikes and in pools while blitzed increased... the hand-gliding and motocross deaths of my classmates increased—it all just didn't mix well for me and my friends. Too many were getting hooked on the powerful chemicals or were biting the dust.

We went out to get away from adults as much as possible. We saw a lot of surf flicks in those days, and my friends were all trying to get a grip so they could live that kind of *Five Summer Stories* dream. But it always seemed economically out of reach. The relationships would sour, the jobs would go up in smoke. I too wanted the *Endless Summer* but where would it all end up and who would it help?

Like millions of my upper and lower classmen, I thought I could... we could, change the world into a more loving place. But we never could trust the older folk—"the establishment." Not trusting people over 30 was the watchword of the day. Yup, that was our attitude, yet we were so like they had been when they were young, but with a slightly different twist and a lot more amplified. We thought we were more progressive—it was just pride.

I don't know why both my parent's generation and my own peers saw alcohol as so alluring, so sophisticated and uber-cool, but at the early age of 17, I was discovering some of the consequences from such a blurred fast-lane lifestyle. I was again, this time with a firsthand knowledge of it as a participant, going to see more ugly results of excessive alcohol use. I was starting to see a major connection with it too ...to a lot of the acute pain my family had suffered while I was growing up.

Could I think of one positive thing that had come from using drugs or alcohol? I honestly couldn't think of one. I didn't know if all the Al-Anon meetings would really help my mom be able to cope with all the stress either.

I determined that there must be more to life than what workaholism, materialism, eastern mysticism, AA, sexual escapades and popularity could offer. There had to be more than getting buzzed each weekend with older people, while fishing for the worm in the bottom of a Jose Cuervo Tequila bottle. There must be a better comfort than Southern Comfort.³

What I couldn't hack or deal with anymore—what I couldn't seem to overcome by my own determination and efforts—was my addiction to the whole party lifestyle though. I wanted so badly to get past all that junk that was hindering me, but my sins of getting falling-down blasted drunk, and sleepin' around with different surfer girls locked me down. Doing the THC at rock concerts from green-water-filled bongos and passing Thai and Columbian joints along with hashish brownies to chew ...it had such a vice-grip-hold on me!

It was my fault and I'm not proud of it at all. I never ever wanted to let my parents down—they had after all worked and sacrificed for us! Sure the sin was fun for a season, but in the early part of 1977 I was starting to reap the pay check so to speak. It was like DEATH INSIDE ME! Bad trips, hangovers, broken friendships, apathy, hopelessness, remorse, lack of good ambition, full culpability, irresponsibility, crushed dreams—what a downer-drag. WHAT A DEPRESSION SESSION! I couldn't seem to get away from snorting lines of snow (cocaine)—my party buddies were always there "to get" or to offer me more. Misery and lawlessness loves company. I was going downhill fast without any brake lever to grab. Who was wise to talk to? It's hard to take life sober without a friend who is a real comforter!

I started feeling that the Beatles, Led Zeppelin, the Who, the Rolling Stones and even Hollywood had let us all down. What kind of role models had these people been for my generation? They constantly sowed the wind without a care and we were reaping the whirlwind! Their messages of hedonism, unbridled pleasure and a literal sympathy for the devil—can you even believe that!—were taking our country's young people eastward and down towards a blazing lake. To Hell in a hand basket we were going. The music style was great, but the lyrics for the most part stunk to high heaven! Not all the songs mind you were harmful, but many of them where from the dark side. Hey, I'm still one to play that *style* of music loud, but not from those bogus artists. Why get ripped off any more? Sure, I'm no prude, but I was starting to reject what my friends were telling me: *"Hey like Kurt, if you are strong in yourself, man, no lyrics will make you think negatively dude."*

I was always too small to participate in many popular sports. I really wanted to play good football for years as my dad wanted me to and I did play, but what I did wasn't very good. I

would get crunched up in the bottom of the pile. That's when I started surfing and playing volleyball. I was nice to win for a change.

Maybe you remember when Nixon was voted into power back in the day? I remember the crowds cheering as the signs waved in the air, as Republicans and the publicans partied the night away. Lots of confetti and red white and blue balloons in the air. Could he lead us to a better day?

When would the Vietnam war end?

I remember feeling worried about my uncle Dave who went off to shoot-em-up in war in Vietnam, while many of his longhaired contemporaries split and thumbed up the coast northward into Canada just to avoid the draft. Man, what would I do if I got drafted? Was this really a just war? Was it all well planned out? Sure I was proud of our men, but those were my thoughts in the night. My family sat in the family room and watched the daily news reports come in, while the body counts piled up high. The casualty reports of these guys who were almost my same age; it made me nervous. Before their departure, they had been struggling with many of the same issues I had wrestled with. That was a seemingly unending fracas overseas and they weren't even allowed to win. How unfair is that! Many soldiers came back missing limbs and just staring off into space. Civilians were mad at them too. I was so glad my uncle Dave made it out alive.

It was really exciting like a lot of things I experienced ...but I was still looking for peace inside. When Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison were alive, I gladly listened to them and heard gobs of talk about peace. Where have these people gone? They all sadly suffered in premature tragic deaths.

Every summer single summer, my family used to drive through Laguna Beach to go hang out with our cousins the Haighs and other old friends at Woods Cove. Jeb and Wendy, who was my dad's sister, led the Haigh clan and we were close to our cousins. We all enjoyed swimming in the tide pools and in the rocky blow hole. And on the way we'd see "The Laguna Greeter" who was actually a man by the name of, Eiler Larsen. He was a native from Denmark. I learned that for over 40 years Eiler would stand on that same corner where the road took a slight turn at 329 South Coast Highway and he would give a friendly wave and a warm smile to all visitors who came by. With a long white-grey beard, a red shirt and shabby jean bellbottoms, we first thought this man must be a panhandler because there were lots of crazy hippies around who had fried their brains on LSD. But in 1963 the city fathers declared Eiler to be the Official Greeter of the town, honor his warmth of public hospitality and they even put his footprints in the sidewalk and erected a life-size wooden statue of him there waving that is still resting on the same spot.



We would have to drive past the Laguna Hari-Christna Compound up on the hill side there and I recall all their chanting, dancing, robes and drumming. Other locals wore Love beads, Peace signs, Psychedelic vests, headbands and fringe. A few of the Jesus Freaks were a bit condemning in the open-air, but most were not. Our neighbors had Love-ins for their bead wearing friends to toke out in. They would dawn Flower Power tie-dye shirts with really long hair and beards.

It kind of freaked me out when the beach babes at school wouldn't shave their legs or pits. In the winter we too wore Bell-bottom jeans, Mexican wedding shirts, the floral Hawaiian shirts, the puka necklaces, the earth shoes and the Birkenstock sandals.

I remember the splendid coconut smell that exuded from our Mister Zogs board wax. We only used that type of wax on our quiver of boards to get a grip—it was the best. We used to strap those sticks high on top of each other on top of my VW bug to head down to Cotton's Point while the water was still glassy in the morning, as we listened to the Doobie Brothers, Foghat and the Bob Seger Silver Bullet band on our eight-track stereo. It was fun, but our's was a culture gone astray and on an intense search. I followed right along with the

masses. We were all like sheep that cared less about the character of the musicians we followed. We'd buy their vinyl albums regardless and hear them at all the parties we visited weekly by this time.



One day a friend named, Bob and I, noticed an eight foot tall marijuana plant growing twenty yards away from where the Fly was glassing our new Bruce Jones surf boards. The Fly was a smaller hippie who was known to be the best board glasser on the whole southern coast. He was casge (casually laid back). This man shaped and glassed in a broken down wooden barn in Capo Beach and this must have been one of his plants we figured. How cool was he—real cool. What a simple mellow life he led.

One of the ways we repaid him for his quality work on our boards was when we snuck back over there to his location, later on at about dusk. We were stealthy in order to rip him off. We knew nothing about pot, but I was the one elected to go grab the top half of that plant and run like my pants were on fire. We'd be kind to him and leave him a little bit we said. So at the right time, when there was no traffic on a neighboring road, I sprang out of the waist high foliage from behind the trees like an Indian and sprinted as fast as I could into that valley. I leaped over some sage to yank off a good portion of this cannabis only to get scratched up on my belly, but it didn't matter. This was illegal activity and that made it all the more daring and sketchy. When we got this plant back to the deep rocky valley behind my house, we hid and plucked off every leaf, to carefully hang them with clothes pins on a string. We didn't know about the buds or how to properly dry out this thing upside down, so that the resins would flow towards the leaf tips. After a week and a half, Bob and I carefully crushed up these leaves one by one and smashed them into some Kiwi shoe polish cans. Our surfer friends at Dana Hills High had a new respect for us too—we were heavy

duty partiers now. Our friends bugged us and wanted to try it out with some Zig Zag papers and a pipe, and they ended up asserting that this was some potent weed we had nabbed. We ended up giving it all to them. But that is how my life of crime got started. Back then for many of our friends, it always seemed to start with pot—the gateway drug.

Some years of this partying rolled by as we hit the waves and were hardly ever home. It wasn't too much longer that some of our friends: Jim Davis, Sam Karver, Bob Genno and Bob Kern all started seeing and talking about the moldiness and futility of our inverted coastal lifestyle. In only four years, we felt older than our days and more streetwise than we ever aimed for. We were too young to be burned out, but it felt like we'd been at it long and we were becoming bored with the drill. I starting having questions that I and my friends and their older brother couldn't seem to answer.

I personally saw a lack of personal creativity, direction, good motivation; self-discipline and skills that I knew should be a part of my life. I was sure I was disconnected from my purpose—I knew it deep in “my knower.” I was originally told that drugs weren't harmful and that they would open my eyes. I never did H or acid, but sure, my eyes saw how empty and lonely I was down inside myself. I saw how selfish, hateful and lustful my friends had become with their use-em-and-lose-em attitudes. My eyes saw more and more of the ugliness and it took more and more to get a thrill. We'd become a pack of losers with a capital “L” without any hope or solace. Some of my high school surfer heroes had now become down and out addicts. After being pulled over by the cops for dope and getting a ticket for having less than an ounce... after one frightening drug-induced car race that I got into on the PCH (Pacific Coast Highway) on prom night, having already crossed lines I had drawn for my date's and my own safety—lines I thought I'd never transgress... I knew that my life was totally out of control. I didn't want to hurt anyone or my parents who sacrificed for us.

I kept trying to quit my bad habits and reform my behavior. It was to no avail. I gave it my best to stop smoking and hitting the bottle especially at work and school. I already knew what sin and the fear of God was, having been raised in a church that periodically read the Book, and I knew that I was a big sinner without a clue. I wanted no illicit drugs to be a part of my present, nor part of my future. How was I going to break free?

One night after stumbling out of the LA coliseum after hearing Led Zeppelin, There was a gracious but bold Christian preaching Christ in the parking lot and I stopped to listen. I might as well, I couldn't locate my car. The typical mockers were yelling and throwing bottles at him, but he kept smiling and going for it. He seemed to have the joy and peace that I was looking for. It made me think.

Perhaps you too have dealt with the big questions: What is the real meaning of life? Why am I even here? What will happen after I die... or would all my good deeds and visiting that confessional box weekly actually keep me out of the never ending flames? I used to have nightmares of getting hit by a car and then trying to drag myself to that same spiritual Laundromat if you will, at our traditional stone cold church that didn't ever the preaching of the Gospel at, but in the nightmare I'd realizing that it wasn't Saturday. The light above the center door would not be lit when my light was going out. All this confessing of sins to a man for cleansing, no longer made sense to me.

My friends had the notion that once a person reached room temperature (in death), they just became worm food and there was nothing left. Life was followed by nothingness. No afterlife. No heaven. No hell. Zilch! Nothing, nada, null!

Does the thought of forever nothingness bug or terrify you like it did me? How could some evil people like Hitler act just like the devil and there be no devil to influence them? Many in my culture were acting like the devil more and more and it made me know there was a God. Why could my friends worship anything or anyone other than Jesus Christ and that would be cool and acceptable in our society? When someone hammered their thumb on the construction site where I worked, why was there only one Name of a God that they would use to curse with when there were so many names of gods to choose from? Why didn't they say "Oh Buddha," or "Oh Krishna!" Did Mister Lu-Cifer long to use people's mouths to spit at and get back at the One who would deal him the final blow in the near future? How could a person like you or me simply cease to be when we kicked the bucket?

My brothers and I enjoyed being full-tilt beach boys surfin' USA. It was when I was 15 years old in 1973 when our family pulled up stakes in La Crescenta and moved to Sea Bright Lane in Dana Point in the wild OC. For many surfers this ocean sport was all about a narcissistic, hedonistic lifestyle—pleasure seeking. You know, get all you can, can all you get and spoil the rest! Some even made surfing and enjoying the environment a religion. So many beach-hippies could talk a good talk of brotherly love, harmony and positive social reform too, but at closer glance they couldn't walk a good walk. And then there were some who lived as exemplary people—they were "saved" folk. One 4A surfer friend; a high school coach of mine that I really respected named, Randy Ziglar, used to spend time with me hitting the waves. He would calmly listen and tell me about his best Friend, Jesus Christ. It reminded me of how my grandmother, Ellen Beck used to encourage me towards Jesus. One day my dad had an off-day so he and I rode our bikes down to a beach called, *Hole in the Fence*, and he was doing most of the talking. Us, teens didn't ever want to incriminate ourselves by flapping our gums—loose lips sink ships! We were sitting there on the sand and he declared that God was the only One who has all the answers and I was glad for how AA was helping him see things like this. Denial isn't a river through Egypt, it was what I need to divest myself from, because I really couldn't take care of myself. Hundreds of us surfer-rats were rebellious dudes out on-the-take; in it for ourselves; living very recklessly. Sadly I became that way and now hated it.

I was becoming convinced by now that I could never ever make myself into the kind of person I really wanted to be ...and ought to be in life. I started recognizing that I needed outside help. I had literally become a part of the problem in this world as I continued hanging out with lowlife riffraff, rock-n-roll-concert-going, hash smoking party mongers.

One or two righteous buddies on the volleyball court also tried to tell me the bad news about my sin along with the Good News about the reality of a relationship with Christ who forgives, but again, because they didn't attend our family's traditional denomination, it all seemed uber-risky to me ... the one who was taking way too many risks anyways. Go figure! I had heard a little bit about the danger of cults, so for safety's-sake I continued to steer clear, but at the same time was still counting the cost as the Holy Spirit kept wooing me in, and as some Christians continued to pray. My grandmother Beck was one of them and would talk positively of knowing Christ.

I started feeling more respect for some of these Jesus people, because I could tell that they lived what they talked about. One surfer friend that I remember playing volleyball with also became reborn while at Dana Hills, but he didn't seem like a crazy Christian who lacked tact and wisdom. He did have a Bible on campus, but wasn't pushy and didn't constantly try to hype us or scare us by talking about the end of the world. He was kind of a quiet guy that simply lived what he believed. I liked hardworking, Mark Gentile and his new teen wife, Barb Lankard. Their cool but simple lives started to influence me.

Up to that point I had been in the habit of turning Christians down when they would invite me to "fellowship" (their meetings) as they attempted to convert me, but why was I so quick to say "no"? I was growing more and more curious about this Nazarene-factor. What was holding me back—what did this looser (me) have to lose? I kind of feared parental and pastoral reprisals to a degree... especially from one minister who was kind of mean at times, but hey, I'd rebelled against the establishment before. What did it really matter what they thought of me?

Even though I used to whole-heartedly mock the saints on occasion by mimicking them saying "Praise the Lord", in my heart I did admire the person of Jesus Christ. I would stop and think about what carelessly slipped out of my mouth—the disrespecting blasphemy and constantly taking God's Name in vain. I just said it and would later feel bad inside. Christ lived a selfless life of love, walking in the truth just like I wanted to live. I didn't always speak the truth because I was afraid of what people would think of me. I'd seen most of Christ's movies on holidays: Ben Hur, The Ten Commandments. Man, Charlton Heston did a great job in that one and I even met him later on. The Greatest Story Ever Told was pretty groovy, Jesus of Nazareth was fairly hip. I also enjoyed: The Robe and King of Kings. I was always moved by the garden prayer and vicious crucifixion scenes in them and thought, *"What an incredibly humble man, and so kind to endure all that for others!"*

***"Listen, my son, and be wise,
and keep your heart on the
right path. Do not join those
who drink too much."
—Proverbs 23:19-20***

Maybe it was time to seriously doubt my doubts. Although I earlier felt certain that Jesus was some hyper-strict religious type of God who was basically indifferent and wouldn't have anything to do with me up-close and personal—an entity way out in the cosmos somewhere ready to slam us. I always wanted to learn what He was really like—I wanted a close, personal and approachable God, but as a kid I did not think He was interested.

One day in the spring of 1977, my mom of all people invited me to a home prayer meeting up in Turtle Rock near the Newport Beach area where she had grown up. I was bored out of my gourd at home and couldn't find anything to do that Thursday night. I had just broke up with my girlfriend in another feeble attempt to clean up my act, so without much thought or fanfare I agreed and told my mom that I would go with her.

When we arrived there, I discovered that I was the only person there under the age of 45 and that I was also the only male. "What have I gotten myself into here" came to my mind. "I'm glad my buddies aren't here to laugh; I'll never tell them about this one" ..were also ideas that invaded my thoughts. The people were nice enough—it was kind of a quaint, warm, cozy, you know.. "homey" kind of setting. One sweet grey headed lady who owned the home named Kathy Tuttle enthusiastically welcomed us, and started out by singing some

simple Christian songs on her acoustic guitar. Hey gang, I was still not impressed, but she kept her eyes closed like she was really into it, so I figured she was not really trying to blow any of us away with her talent. She also started teaching authoritatively from the Bible about Jesus in a very simple clear way about how we each could come to know Him personally. I listened up, because I was now very intrigued with this topic and Person.

Who wouldn't want to become like Him with His winsome character, courage, and loving heart?

Any compassionate clear thinker who had the guts and took the time to sing directly to Him or to talk about Him to me really had my ear! I was over it—over a moldy life of sin. I'd had my fill and wanted out. I found myself hungrier than ever. That evening was my moment—God had given me a readiness to hear. I was totally fine with everything that was said and taught... as long as no one told any of my friends about me being there. That would be considered the equivalent to social homicide at Dana Hills High School where I attended. Maybe I could remain like a secret-agent believer?



I just hated it when self-righteous religious pontificators talked down at me or tried to cram Jesus down my throat with their ego mixed in. But this wasn't happening at all that night. People had intelligent questions and pity comments. It was interactive. Everyone was being respectful, practical and down to earth. My sun bleached shoulder length hair didn't even bug any of these older ones. It was a positive uplifting experience, that wasn't dead, legalistic, mysterious and hyper-liturgical like at my church. They also prayed for several people as if Christ was sitting right there with them and really wanted to get involved. I didn't know how to pray like they did, but I kind of studied this group a little bit and noticed that there were no close-minded disdainers in that circle of folding medal chairs with me. I was always used to being around scoffers, or being a mocker when the God squad turned up and brought up

the Jesus stuff. Hey, you didn't mock me, I mocked you—my aim up to that point had been to make it into an art form!

*Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe.
Sin had left a crimson stain
He washed it white as snow!*

I had been a little lonely and feeling low earlier that night, but at the end of that twenty minute talk, Kathy, the leader came over and initiated a quiet private conversation with me. I can't remember her

exact wording, but she basically asked me if I would like to turn from all sin to Christ, and then be filled to overflowing with the empowering "epi-experience" of the third Person of the Godhead. What she was talking about is more than a mere foretaste of the euphoria of Heaven.⁴

I figured; what do I have to forfeit that was of any real value? In fact I didn't even care what I would lose. I sensed a powerful peace in that place that I hadn't experienced before. So that night I prayed a: "God forgive me; I'm a sinner. I believe Jesus died on the cross for me and I need Him real bad. And I also want this Spirit-empowering that was talked about too!" kind of prayer. Something changed in me immediately—Someone flooded into my being. It was like a lot of waves of warm electricity. I remember holding on to the sides of that chair, trying not to cry, but I did weep. I can't really explain it, but I was different. I had the distinct sensation that a tremendous weight had been lifted off my shoulders and I was forgiven. Peace, JOY, pure love—it was an exciting new world for me! In no uncertain terms, I knew my life had changed dramatically—from religion to reality—WOW! Spiritual scales literally fell from my eyes; I was seeing technicolor, and all of a sudden a future was there for me. One morning alone in my bedroom I surprised myself when I started praying in other tongues. How COOL is that!

I returned to this fun home Bible study pretty often after that and started ardently telling my coworker-buds in the restaurant where I worked near my home all about Jesus and what I was learning there. Some of my friends came with me and were born again with my grey headed lady friends. My older brother Kevin and an excellent surfer—the rankest sinner I knew, Jim Davis, came. Man, did his life ever change radically! At school and on the beach, I started not caring so much what others thought and determined not to use churchy kind of language with people who were open and wanted to talk about it. Some came to Christ on the spot there at the sandy and rocky beach called Dana Strands and some just wanted to join with me and go investigate this meeting. Other so called friends would talk like we were still buddies, but they ditched me fast and permanently. Some would say to each other, "Let's go give 'god-man' a hard time" when I arrived on campus. I didn't mind it all, because there certainly was a lot of residual quirkiness in me and past foibles I'd done that I could easily join in with them to laugh at and joke about. God had only begun to sanctify me from the inside out. I was just one zit-faced ordinary guy out to change my world through Jesus Christ and I was way determined to let Him work! No friend of mine was going to take of fire easily if I could prevent it! I used to be so cold-blooded and arrogant, but if I could just be a bit self-effacing, look past their bad habits and point them to Christ ...maybe that would help! Maybe the Spirit could makeup for all my weaknesses and aid them in adjusting to my new Message and mentor-Master. Perhaps incorporating some verses I'd heard and using some humor at my own expense, Jesus would ignite a fire in them too! Everyone likes a good laugh and I had exuberant joy bubblin' over! It was hard to contain. They'd feel proud if they knew how much I held back. Yes, I was falling deeply in-love and never want to compare Jesus to some kind of drug trip, but how could I not find Him to be a higher high—THE MOST HIGH!

The mocker became the mockee!

More of my classmates found out as the weeks rolled by. They laughed at—"the surfer dude who got religion!" Not a problem. I didn't deserve to be saved, and wasn't living for their approval or for popularity or blessings. My real friends stuck by my side, happy that my attitude had changed for the good and that I was on the right track rather than continually destroying myself. What mattered was that God was answering my prayers for people. I started praying on my knees daily for my lost dad ...with tears. God was giving me a new love for my parents. I felt compelled to pray hard and it took a couple years. For a while it

seemed that their verbal fights got worse and fierce. They started flinging curse words at each other—ones I'd never heard them use before.

It wasn't long before I was ocean-water-baptized in the Dana Point Harbor in Dana Point. My friends told me this would be important (not to get saved, I already was) and they showed me some verses that encouraged this. This was one season where I really grew fast spiritually too. And I met a whole bunch of strong surfer-Christians my own age and started attending *Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa* up the coast with Pastor Chuck Smith where the "Jesus movement" was in full swing. It was beyond awesome and so relevant—no stodgy or verklemmt religious boredom or cheap TV styled fluff and fu fu! I could actually apply what I was learning from the Bible for the first time in my life! Jesus was so real to me and has become more real with each passing day. The out-growth of receiving so much sound Bible teaching was that God gave me a larger love for unbelievers and started using me more in verbally witnessing to, and wining some of my volleyball buddies. He delights to bless and use His kids!

After high school I bought a condo near the beach and sold real estate for a couple years, but I would often find myself questioned by potential sellers during the course of my day and would often find myself addressing the greatest needs of my clientele – the spiritual ones. I enjoyed living for and talking about Jesus more than anything else and was eventually called of God to Gospel ministry in 1980 while fasting.

In response to that call, I drove a long way to Texas in recently acquired VW hippie bus – my van with the flowered curtains, coco mats and Aloha surf racks. This is where I studied the Word more in-depth at a couple different Bible colleges in the Dallas area during the 80's. There where a lot of students my age and we had a great time together. More importantly, I noticed that my vertical candor, faith and relationship with Jesus really developing.

It was during this time that I met my beautiful fiancé, Liney, who was also a Bible school student. And She was an answer to prayer; a righteous fox and still is! As single people, she and I separately were involved in summer missions trips that were very exciting. God moved to meet some people's needs on those outreaches too. I learned that He could use anyone who was willing and who would give Him all the glory. After our marriage in '82 I continued to make some short term missions trips into Eastern and Western Europe. This was an exciting time before the Wall fell in Berlin and I would visit East and West Germans during that time.

I've also done years of work in high-end Dallas hotels. It was kind of my tentmaker business to pay our bills. We were perk-rich and it was always fun to dine out at the finest restaurants and meet stars, professional athletes, presidents, singers and big named preachers. I remember rooming the Queen of England in room 820 at the Adolphus once and then going shopping for her at the original Neiman Markus accompanied by her long time, elderly butler who regularly traveled with her to do her hair. She's very nice lady, but meeting even the best of these people didn't change my life like Hollywood would want us to believe.

I remember getting the door for President George Bush Senior and delivering flowers to the Ronald Reagan family on the 25th floor at the Anatole during the Republican National

Convention. There were large flower arraignments everywhere and the windows of his huge corner suite were all bullet proof.

I never asked for an autograph from anyone, but I wrote their names down and filled up three pages to remember them all. And my kids liked to pray for them. I remember meeting Glen Ford, Anthony Qinn, Ginger Rogers, Bill Blass, Charlton Heston, Dabney Colman, Princes Stephanie, Prince Reinier, Brook Shields, Gary Busey, Rob Lowe and many others. Fro me it was such an honor to talk with Billy Graham's pastor, W. A. Criswell. They were all interesting people.

I also served for the decade of the eighties as a Pastor over East Dallas home groups at an eleven-thousand-member local church that was reaching out to the lost regularly in many practical ways.

In 1990 Stephan, Nathan, Christian (our three awesome sons), Liney and I were properly sent out to Germany from our local church in Dallas where we would serve the Lord as independent missionaries. And we where privileged to help in establishing five new local churches (basing from a German church in Augsburg near Munich). I work closely with a great missionary named John Dorrough who was the founder of the work, and as a co-laborer with him, I taught for four years in *Harvest Bible School* in Bavaria. What a blast! His family was always such a blessing for my family to be around. I also oversaw what several in the area called "a thriving youth ministry" and we traveled extensively doing itinerant evangelism throughout the European Union. God gave us some success reaching out to youth in the bohemian culture there. Some of the religious leaders called our work worldly, because we had some kicking Christian rock concerts, but we didn't compromise. It was a lot like then Jesus Movement in California during the '60s and '70s so we could easily fit in and relate to these young people exiting the clubbing and party scene.

When we (the von Schleichers) finally returned to America, I was invited to become an assistant pastor at another ten-thousand-plus-member Church in Carrollton a suburb of Dallas.

In our travels, we have learned a lot about healthy churches and not-so healthy churches, (Most congregations have been very helpful, but unfortunately for a time I was hired to work in two where the pastors wanted me to pressure the people for money etc. We refused and exited). Liney and I learned a lot about the unique distinctions of doctrine (essential teachings and non-essential ones) and various practices within the different streams of Christendom. God loves His Church—that's the only thing Jesus the Head, left behind when He ascended—not some restaurant chain, law firm, or set of gas stations. We really want to be and remain non-sectarian, spiritually sensitive and totally sincere in what we are doing to help His Church ...and be open to learning from all types of believers as we preach Christ.

Getting started, I learned how Jesus explained that each person was either for Him or against Him. May I ask you today ...what side are you on? Christ said, ***"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters"*** (Lk. 11:23). It's true what the rock 'n' roll artist, Bob Dylan once sang, *"You're gonna have to serve somebody, well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you're gonna have to serve somebody."* Are you fishing for souls?—gathering people unto Jesus and into His eternal Kingdom? He said, ***"Unless you repent you will all likewise perish"*** (Lk. 13:5). That

simply means be done with a life of sin, as you turn to Him. He wants no one to perish from rejecting His offer of life. The Bible says of Christ, ***“He came unto His own, and His own received him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”*** (Jn. 1:11-13).

Faith in Christ was an either or deal for early Christians as it is for us. You are in the light or in the darkness. You are either saved or lost, bound for a real place called Heaven, or a horrific place—you know, HE double hockey sticks.

I used to think that Jesus was just a cool historical figure who lived a long time ago, did some good deeds, cast flowers into the crowd with a peaceful eastern style. I saw him as one who pet little animals and kids, one who had a lamb wrapped around his shoulders and taught brotherly love. I didn't think He would not stoop down to getting involved in the affairs of life in my world, but he was a role model to emulate. I was so wrong. He's a lot more than I thought. He cares about the littlest things in my life and in yours. He alone can forgive and help you in a lasting way.

For me that all seemed too good to be true, but it wasn't. We've all blown it bad and the sins we've committed bring death, but over 2000 years ago sinless Jesus died on a lonely cross in your place—in my place. And He rose again on the third day so you and I could know Him and eternal life. He is there for you! If you want to know Christ in a personal way, then you need to pray, get real with Him, repent, and then go public with this decision. Your friends will need to hear of Him, as well. Everyone who Jesus called, He called openly and publicly. We must never be ashamed of being associated with Him—He wasn't ashamed of us when He hung there on that cross and bled! If it truly is possible to know Jesus in a personal way, wouldn't you just love that? Well you can!

Jesus has living water that truly satisfies! Because I remember so clearly the destructive path I was on and the dramatic way my life's course radically changed when Christ entered the picture, I so want to tell my generation. They have important questions too—so many people are asking them these days. I had those questions, but Christ came through for me and answered them. I'm still growing too. The best way to not go backwards spiritually is to be constantly going forwards in Him!

My childhood pastor taught that my questions couldn't be answered saying all these things are “a mystery,” but I've discovered that God came here to reveal mysteries to us. He doesn't want to leave us in the dark! He wants us to know and believe the truth found in His Word. I'm a bibliophile now—I can't seem to get to the bottom of His Bible and I'm totally intrigued with the Author!

God's the initiator and Christianity isn't at all reactionary; it's revolutionary! It's sad that Christians today are known more for what we're against, that what we're for. Many don't seem to have any warmth or a sense of humor anymore. What a shame! Jesus laughed and wept and held the children He really loved. I want to be known for being spiritual and authentic like He is, more than for being known as a conservative or a Republican. Some Christians are more concerned about who will be in the White House than who will be in God's house. Some want to picket, protest and sign their name on petitions (and there's a

place for that)—more than they want to spread the Good News. Do we pray as seriously as Jesus did? Why is His sort of evangelism not on the minds of most Christians? He was accused of being the Friend of sinners. That's how I want to be! Christianity is pro-Christ. It isn't anti-Semitic, anti-gay-person, anti-abortionist or anti mother who has gotten one! It isn't anti any sinner, ***“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost”*** (Lk. 19:10).

Our time is so limited here. I never ever want to be a typical Christian who is all cloistered away inside this Western Christian subculture; afraid to befriend or interact with secular thinkers or those in a different culture ...nor be pulled down by them either! I never wanted to plant my little church castle or kingdom and huddle behind walls of financial or other alleged “security” that separate ..for fear.. striving to add more righteous people to an inverted, small-minded sectarian group. So many saints are lukewarm and distracted, but *negative* I will not remain! I love all church people and seek to build them up. But if a church is sick, I say point it to the Word with passion and quickly put it on a soul-winning diet! All defensive, pharisaical or offensive (I mean apart from the normal offensiveness of the Gospel), hording forms of so called 21st century Christianity make me want to hurl! Uncaring dead religion repulses me. Jesus said, *“Go”* so how can we call Him Lord saying, *“No”*?

Sins of omission are no less serious as sins of commission today. I pray for clean motives, clean thoughts; a clean heart, a clean Message of potency ..with no spiritually poisonous or useless additives mixed in ..nor prostitution of the gifts for the purpose of money-grubbing. I want this for you and me. Every decision must be prayerfully weighed in the light of Christ's great commandment and Great commission. I'll have no blood on my hands! Jesus wants us red hot, minus all idols—that means putting nothing and no one ahead of our relationship with Him.

I want to know Him well and make Him well known! If I am ever known (which I don't lust or strive for), I want it to be for what and Who I'm for—it's Jesus Christ and His righteousness. It's for living 100% for Him... for being a lover of all types of people. Sure I'm against everything that hurts God and His creation—that's sin. But the best way to combat that is to preach the truth of the Word in love. Sure, I'll speak out against wickedness, but also about God being for the wicked. If we teach what the Bible says about specific sins—and how God hates the destruction of sin—then we should also tactfully frame what we say in the light of the Gospel. I like to tell of the homosexuals that I know who have come to Christ and have been permanently liberated from homosexuality. I want to reach gay people rather than repel them.

I want to out-pray, out-fight (with spiritual rather than carnal weapons) and out-live the secular thinkers around me. I want to build a bridge, rather than a wall of separation. I want God to use me to win people rather than merely try to reform their behavior. Sinners can feel rejected, like we don't accept them or are somehow better than them when we only harp on what they need to give up. We aren't better, we're just better off. I'm a conservative who cares, but I want to be known *more* for being a mature balanced Christian than just a conservative.

Come just as you are!

Come willing to repent and to let Christ change you! Today with rampant porn, perverts, and all the subsequent abortions from such narcissistic pleasure-seeking lifestyles; with all the disrespect, punch-outs and shootouts in our children's classrooms and gang killings in our urban areas; with people stealing diesel from the farmers due to radical immorality and the extra high cost of living; with strange under qualified people running for office, with the increase of suicides, violent hurricanes, destructive earth quakes and tsunamis, along with devastating tornados, wildfires and wars out of control... with the mud slides, flooding and severe thunderstorms tearing up the country from one end to another, and with the threat of bird flu, mad cow disease, AIDS, salmonella-tainted tomatoes making us sick... with the random biological and explosive Islamic terrorist attacks, and wild eyed Moslems dedicated to nuking Israel right off the map and no more prophecies needing to be fulfilled before the rapture of the Church into the third heaven, are we really so sure taking prayer and the Ten Commandments out of schools along with God out of the Pledge of Allegiance is really such a good idea? Are you sure that rejecting Christ—or putting off a relationship with Him—is really the primo option at a time like this?

We are living in a day when the truth is whatever you feel it should be. We are living in an era when false teachers with their countless spiritual fads (even within Christian churches) are a dime a dozen and when people feel "entitled to" a whole lot, according to their own terms and timing. We live in a self-loving, pleasure-seeking society of victims where many are bitter, playing the blame-game. **But the bottom-line is that you need the Jesus Christ of the Bible! He is not a way among other ways—He is the only Way to get into Heaven and avoid a real place called Hell.**

Oh sure, I remember when the milkman left bottles of milk at our kitchen door in the olden days, and we had never even heard of the milk of the Word. Hey, we can get nostalgic all day about how it was, but to cut to the chase ...you must be genuinely born all over again ...and then act like it. Why? Because Jesus said you must be (see John 3:3), and now is the time!

Are you rich or poor, male or female, famous or living in obscurity? Are you American, European, Asian, Latino, African, black, white, yellow, or brown, other? Well, these four things Billy Graham found to be true of all humanity.

Each person, no matter of their geographical location, no matter how rich they are, no matter how powerful they are, has an **emptiness** inside. Every person is **lonely** in a way that human relationships on the horizontal level can not fill. It's a deep loneliness for God. Children can't fill it, friends can't fill it, rock stars, actors and politicians can fill it—no mere man can. Do you sense that void inside you that only God can fill? There's a sense of **guilt** in every human. Not only are we all empty, lonely, and guilty ...each one of us also experiences at times a **fear of physical death**.

Guess what? Jesus Christ can address any and all of these issues ...to your satisfaction! Sure there will be trials and temptations if you decide to walk with Him. Who on this planet has it always easy? But the retirement benefits are out of this world for Christians. I can see that this world is more messed up that ever before, but can also see that Christ is powerfully on His throne! You might have done a whole lot of sinning in your life. Christ will receive you on

His terms, not yours. Please get home before dark! The Apostle Paul said, ***“The law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound”*** (Rom. 5:20, kjv). Sin once abounded in my Orange County family life, but God’s grace has much more. And what He’s done for us, He’ll do for you ...if you’ll let Him.

I want you to be careful, because there are many money-grubbing false teachers inside and outside Christian churches today. There are many so called churches out there that are doctrinally or sociologically *off* according to the Scriptures. Frankly my wife and I have seen some hurtful things happen in churches (not all churches)—things some leaders did that were very hurtful to God’s people and should never happen anywhere.

We also got sick of the lame spiritual fads that never seem to cease coming down the pike in some circles—and sadly they’re still proliferating globally today, allegedly *“in Jesus Name.”* That’s why we can certainly empathize and identify with Christians who have had trouble finding the right place to fit in and serve within the Body of Christ. Things can look so right in some churches for a short period of time, but what does their statement of faith really say or not say?

Though my wife and I have always attended church weekly wherever we’ve lived, because the Bible teaches us Christians not to be ***“forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some...”*** (Heb. 10:25, nkjv)—we have also found it sometimes to be very difficult to locate a sound Bible teaching Christ-honoring local church.

Please know that there are also many excellent spiritual pastors and loving churches that do not compromise the truth. We know that through prayer, vertical trust and you proactively seeking, God will guide you to a decent church with a saved mature pastor where you can enjoy and commit to fellowship and serving the Lord. That’s way important! It can be so exciting to study the Bible, to pray, to come together in Jesus Name and to share your faith with unbelievers for the purpose of winning them to Christ. Trust God to use you!

I haven’t forgotten my little sister, Kathy, and other friends of mine who passed away prematurely. I haven’t forgotten where I came from, or the way I used to feel. It’s great to have saved family members! My dad used to carry boxing gloves around in the truck of his car for all those who opposed him, so they could square off and duke-it-out until one was knocked out. He was born again in 1980 and he’s still an all-out fighter, but now he fights with spiritual weapons to help people.

He has been a successful businessman in the area of Real-estate for decades as the Broker of Record for a very large company which was part of the top market share brand in Orange County. He was responsible for the supervision of 460 agents in an award-winning office that led the way in sales for all offices of all real-estate companies in California for multiple years.

New Wine In Place Of The Old...

My dad has become a bold, mature, and balanced believer who volunteers at his church regularly. Is he perfect? No, and like me, he would quickly tell you that. But it’s the Spirit of God who uses the man of God to preach the Word of God to produce the child of God. Then God sanctifies His kids. My dad knows that. He knows that no religion or church can save anyone.

It happened for dad in 1980. One day my mom, who wanted to see my dad become a better Catholic filled with love, asked me what they should go do out on a date that night. I suggested she take my dad up to *Calvary Chapel* in Costa Mesa to see a movie called "Distant Thunder" about Bible eschatology and end times events. Well she did and as is their custom there, they always present the Gospel with an effective altar call. A friend named, Jimmy Kempner, preached the Word that night and my dad quickly responded by going forward along with a bunch of young surfers. Together they reverently voiced a sinner's prayer as my dad turned his whole life over to Christ. And it was only a couple weeks later that a wonderful man named, Wally Jennings, when they were talking inside his little Plymouth car, showed him the specific Scriptures and helped him receive the gift of tongues—a special prayer language.

In my dad's own words he told me how he had recently prayed to have a better relationship with the Father and after that Distant Thunder flick my dad said that God *"introduced me to His Son. I recognized that Jesus Christ is God, confessed that I am a sinner, in need of a Savior. I realized that Jesus paid the price in full for all of my sins, past, present and future and I turned my life over to Him. I was a 'born again' Christian. The Father drew me to the Son. What a relief it was to find out that no amount of 'good works' could get me to heaven; Jesus already paid with His blood for my entry."*

Apparently years earlier, in the Tom Sawyer Camp offices there was a committed Christian lady named, Evelyn Hill, who prayed in faith. She was the secretary for the Camp's accountant, George Kisner, and she somehow got my grandfather, Bill as we called him, to attend a Christian meeting that was filled with 7000 people at Los Angeles' Shrine Auditorium. He went to hear Kathryn Kuhlman minister the Word and came to faith in Jesus. Then Bill in turn got my dad to accompany him one night, where he also experienced the fiery passion of the Spirit. Some seeds were indeed planted in my dad's heart—God was gently wooing and preparing him.⁵

My dad, Kim, has keen insight and lots of wisdom today and that's why so many of us go to him (after we first go to God) for godly counsel. I used to feel like he was my enemy, but God has made us best of friends and my family really looks up to him. Nothing impedes his progress and growth now. Alcohol and stubbornness used to keep him from reaching his potential. But he, along with several of my relatives are sold-out Christians today—they really know the Lord. God has really my dad as an effective witness on the streets and before crowds. He is a role model for many, especially to those trying to break free from substance abuse. It's been almost 40 years since he's had a drink and his mind is sharp as can be. He is salty in a good way and shines brightly in California's darkness. All his friends have seen a big change in him over the years. He's become more loving, kind and gentle everyday and God gets all the credit! No more drinking of spirits for us, for we receive a better comfort from the Holy Spirit!⁶ That's what the Bible commands: ***"Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit"*** (Eph. 5:18, nkjv). My sober parents have been married for over half a century now and I thank God for them both!

It's incumbent upon all of us Christians to consistently live soberly, godly, and holy lives without compromise! The Lord can give us a burden—a supernatural, heartfelt concern and a sense of urgency in soul-winning as we stay in close fellowship with Christ. Jesus Himself lived with that passion! Daily unbelievers are watching us and we need to intercede for

them. We need to do this for all our friends and relatives so that God will soften their hearts, grant true repentance, open their eyes and save them ...just as He desires to do for each one! In or out, saved or lost, children of the day or of the night... yes, people will be going forwards or backwards spiritually—no in-between! They'll at best be overcomers in Christ as spiritual believers and *posses the land* of their high calling as they walk in the Spirit, or they will be overcome by sin, Satan, their flesh and this world's system ...as carnal, lukewarm, worldly defeated ...or at worst, spiritually dead people. We each must choose!

*To every man there openeth a high way and a low,
And every mind decideth the way his soul shall go.*

*One ship sails East, and another West,
By the self-same winds that blow, 'Tis the set of the sails,
And not the gales that tells the way we go.*

*Like the winds of the sea are the waves of time,
As we journey along through life. 'Tis the set of the soul,
That determines the goal, and not the calm or the strife.⁷*

May I ask you: What is your ultimate goal—what's your master passion? What are you living for? Is it just for another person or for perishable things like a bigger house, a faster car, a better job? Christ saved my dad and I am so grateful. Money can't buy that! He rescued me too. I wasn't always this way—I was a full-on miserable rebel and our home was like Hell on earth. But Christ forgave me free and clear. I'm not proud of what I was and neither is my dad, but we are out to encourage people, because they won't always have an occasion to get things settled with God. Soon our time here will be over. Are you ready for that?

Dr. Addison Alexander once wrote: *"There is a time we know not when, a point we know not where, that marks the destiny of men, to glory or despair. There is a line, by us unseen, that crosses every path, the hidden boundary between, God's patience and His wrath. To pass that limit is to die, to die as if by stealth; it does not quench the beaming eye, or pale the glow of health. The conscience may be still at ease, the spirits light and gay, that which is pleasing still may please, and care be thrust away. But on that forehead God has set, indelibly a mark, unseen by man, for man as yet, is blind and in the dark. And yet the doomed man's path below may bloom as Eden bloomed; he did not, does not will not know, or feel that he is doomed. He knows; he feels that all is well, and every fear is calmed; he lives, he dies, he wakes in hell, not only doomed but damned. Oh where is that mysterious bourne, by which our path is crossed, beyond which, God Himself hath sworn, that he who goes is lost? How far may we go on in sin? How long will God forbear? Where does hope end, and where begin, the confines of despair? An answer from the skies is sent; "Ye that from God depart, while it is called today repent, and harden not your heart."*

It's not that God wouldn't forgive us if we came to him while still alive, but so many go past the point of no return, because they never want to or even think to repent and believe.

Today is the day! Come with your problems, hang-ups, feelings of inadequacy or insecurity. Don't merely try to clean yourself up in order to come. Come with your shortcomings, and addictions—just as you are to Christ, willing to be regenerated and transformed! Contrary to

popular belief, not all will be saved. Only sinners who have received God's forgiveness and serve Jesus will go to Heaven.

You may never have another opportunity. I pled with you now to get right in the light, before you get left in the dark! What God's done in my family, He can do for you ...and He'll do it for others as well, because though He is holy and just, though He must punish those who break His laws, He loves us all the same!

Do you have a prayer request? Would you like to know Christ? Would you like to share with us what God is doing in your life? To check out my personal Web site, go to: fish4souls.org

When you get the time, be sure to prayerfully read the verses listed above in their own neighborhood of the Bible so to speak, as we encourage you to do with everything we put out. A text without a context is a pretext (or a proof text). Cults get started on proof texts and we want to expose them by properly teaching ..all the counsels of God. Kurt asks that you test everything he says against the Scriptures. Why? It's because God wants you to do this with every minister. You remember how the people of Berea were wiser and nobler than those in Thessalonica—*“they listened eagerly to Paul's Message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to check up on Paul and Silas, to see if they were really teaching the truth. As a result, many Jews believed”* (Act 17:11-12, nlt).

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¹ My dad simply didn't know where to find abundant life in Christ—life during life. None of us in my family even knew where to start looking. But speaking of knowing the Lord intimately, the Word tells us how God longs to bless us and make us a blessing. It says of God, *“You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore”* (Ps. 16:11, nkjv).

² I got this from “Bits & Pieces,” from May, 1990, p. 18.

³ The Bible says, *“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise”* (Prov. 20:1, nkjv). It says, *“Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is and do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit”* (Eph. 5:18, nkjv).

⁴ Every person needs to experience the *para*, *en*, and *epi* experiences with the Holy Spirit (those are three Greek prepositions in the Bible regarding the different types of relationship we can enjoy with the third Person of the Godhead)—it's all given freely so you will be an empowered winsome witness for Christ!

⁵ My dad quotes the words of Jesus in reference to his own salvation: *“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day”* (Jn. 6:44). Kim says his favorite scripture is what God told Paul: *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me”* (2 Cor. 12: 9). Kim said, *“Many times in my more than 30 years of walking with the Lord I have found myself in situations or positions of helplessness, frustration, fear, pain or suffering. I learned to count on that Scripture for deliverance and peace, the Lord's peace, not my own. He always delivers when I rely on Him.”*

⁶ All Christians need to experience the *Epi* empowering of the third Person of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit (He's called the Comforter). We need to be filled and refilled and be daily controlled by the Holy Spirit. What good has drinking beer done for anyone? Nothing good comes from it. Christian, do not associate with so call Christians who get drunk and love to sin. Limit your time with carnal Christians and lost people. Spend some time and witness to unbelievers, but don't let them pull you down spiritually!

⁷ We all must decide and not to decide is to decide—that tells Jesus “No!” to his provision of free salvation. But this is a wonderful short poem by Ella Wheeler Wilcox (written in 1916).