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**Destiny**

**A Legend of Our Time™**

**By Walter Lewis**

**Hedge Fund Manager, Calafia Oak Financial Management Group®**

**VOLUME TWO**

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**New York City in 1970**

**When the morning finally arrived in August 1970 to load up my Volkswagen Bug and drive out of Ann Arbor, I was completely ready to hit the road. Although I had very much enjoyed the University of Michigan, I felt it was time to leave. I wanted a new adventure, and law school in New York City would certainly be a new adventure.**

**I had fantasized many times over the last two years in Ann Arbor about the day when I would drive down Packard Avenue heading to law school. Usually, my fantasies had me heading west to Stanford University in Palo Alto, but my direction now was driving eastward. I did not realize at that time how definitely I would feel, years later, that the East Coast was the best direction for me. As an adult, I realize now that I probably would not have liked Stanford nearly as much as I liked New York University School of Law and New York City.**

**The drive to New York City was uneventful, but it was a full day’s tiring drive. For the second time in my life, I had decided to attend a school that I had never visited prior to my first day on campus as a student. I had never visited Ann Arbor before I became a student at the University. But I wasn’t worried in 1966. Things had worked out fine in Ann Arbor, and I was confident New York City would be the same. After all, I had been to New York City on several occasions as a teenager, so I knew what to expect.**

**A building with trees and people walking in front of it

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**New York University School of Law**

**I pulled the Volkswagen up to the front door of the law school dormitory and squeezed into a parking space that was dangerously close to a fire hydrant. There were a lot of students moving into the Hayden Hall dormitory, and the building’s management had made available a dozen moving carts into which the incoming students would pile their belongings to quickly unload their cars and move their suitcases and boxes up to their dormitory rooms. I was lucky; I was able to get a moving cart right away, filled the cart with all the belongings from my car and took the elevator up to my eighth-floor dorm room.**

**I had been assigned a roommate named Robert Graves, but the room was empty; I was the first to arrive. As I unloaded the moving cart outside the door of my dorm room, a White student walked up to me and said, “After you finish here, can you come and see what’s wrong with the hot water faucet in my room?”**

**I turned and looked at the guy. He was a young man, undoubtedly a law school student. I realized immediately that he had mistaken me for a janitor. I stopped what I was doing and looked at him long enough to make him uncomfortable before I spoke, “I don’t work here. I’m a student just like you.” His face turned red with embarrassment, and he hastily walked away without a further word. I later learned that the young man was a right-wing student activist, who would after several weeks cause his roommate to leave the room in disgust regarding his politics.**

**I really liked the way the NYU Law School campus was arranged. The dormitory was only 100 yards from the classroom building and the law school dining room was located on the first floor of the dormitory. It was a very efficient arrangement if your primary concern was studying. Everything was conveniently located in one place; there was no need to travel.**

**Classes started in two days, but the next day was highlighted by an orientation address by the law school dean. Just about the entire class of almost 400 students gathered in a large auditorium. The dean told us to look to our right and then to our left as we sat in the auditorium. He said, “One of you three is not going to make it to graduation. Make sure you are not that one.”**

**I was confident that I would make it to graduation because I was determined to learn the information that was being taught. Even if it meant studying night and day, I wanted to learn. I knew I would not be the one person who failed to make it to graduation.**

**Making friends was easy, since there was the feeling that we were all in this boat together. Robert Graves, my roommate, didn’t arrive until the day classes started. He was friendly, but from the very beginning it seemed that he was not really interested in being in law school. After only a few weeks, he dropped out of school, and left America for a tour of Europe.**

**Right from the very start of classes it was clear that each evening’s reading assignments would be massive. Especially in the first year, the amount of time spent preparing for the next day’s classes was challenging. A student needed to be committed to putting in the hours necessary to read the cases that were assigned and study the principles. It took several weeks to realize that fear itself magnified the real difficulty of the task that was presented to each student. The workload was manageable, but each person had to realize that fact for himself or herself and commit to what was needed to keep up.**

**Keeping up with the reading load was one thing, but there was another huge fear that had to be confronted. Namely: Getting over the fear of being called on to answer the professor’s questions in class. At the beginning, few students wanted to be called on; virtually no one wanted to answer any questions posed by the professor. One student was openly mocked by a professor as he laughed at her response to a question. It was painful to watch. The student’s name was Amanda Richardson, and her answer, which was “It is the touchstone of the law” will live in NYU Law School history for two reasons. First, because of the professor’s open ridicule and embarrassment of a first-year student – probably the worst in history. Second, was the fact that Amanda wore the shortest skirts in North America. Many presumed Amanda was a ditzy blonde. It was a surprise to many when Amanda graduated from NYU as a member of Law Review, with a grade-point near the top of the class of 1973.**

**I sure didn’t want to be called on for anything for the first several weeks of class, since I was not confident about the material being studied.**

**However, there were some exceptions to the norm. There were some students who constantly raised their hands. One of the Black students, Ken Jefferson, thrived on speaking in class; he wanted to comment on every issue. That was a little scary for me because Ken and I often sat next to each other in class. Sometimes, I felt the urge to hide under the desk since Ken would draw the professor’s attention in our direction by volunteering to answer. Another Black student was the same as Ken, but his comments were always from the perspective of a social worker, rather than a lawyer. The professors were inclined to avoid the out-of-place social worker after a few weeks of off-point debates.**

**For several weeks I was very lucky because none of my professors called on me to answer questions during their lectures. Finally, I decided to raise my hand and answer a question. I should have kept my hands on the desktop because my answer was dead wrong. It was so far wrong that it was laughable; fortunately, only the professor rolled his eyes and none of the other students realized how totally wrong my answer was. And with that, I got over my fear of being called on in class. The irony was, I felt that no answer will ever be as bad as that first one, and I had not died from embarrassment. After that I just didn’t want to be called on in class because answering the professor’s inquest was tension filled and difficult. But I was no longer afraid.**

**In law school, classroom participation has no effect on a student’s grades; plus, attendance has no effect. The only factor that determines a student’s grade was that person’s performance on the subject’s final exam. And there is generally only one exam and no quizzes during the semester. Some people felt that the one-test system placed too much emphasis on a single examination.**

**I preferred the emphasis on one exam. The students only had to get an A on the final to get an A in the course. There was no beating around the bush with surprise quizzes or midterm exams. Plus, there was a tradition at NYU that prevented the professors from knowing the identity of the students whose exams they were grading. There were no names on the exams; instead, code numbers would assure the students’ anonymity during the grading process. I loved the anonymous grading system. My grade point was spectacular.**

**I wanted to continue training in Tae Kwon Do, so I was happy to discover after two weeks of classes that NYU did have Tae Kwon Do classes every Tuesday and Thursday, and the martial arts school was on Mercer Street, which was not very far away from the law school dormitory. Plus, I was excited to find that the instructor was a man named Duk Sung Son. In the world of Tae Kwon Do, Grandmaster Son held a ninth-degree black belt, and he was the president of the World Tae Kwon Do Association. Grandmaster Son was famous, first in Korea in the 1940’s and now as an instructor at several colleges around New York City.**

**A cover of a book

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**Grandmaster Duk Sung Son**

**When I walked into Mr. Son’s dojo for the first time, I was impressed by the large number of students, as well as the large size of the facility. One of the problems often encountered when a student starts at a new dojo is the requirement that all students start as a white belt. I hoped this wouldn’t happen to me, because I had already put a good deal of time into acquiring my green belt at the University of Michigan. Grandmaster Son began the class, and I could easily appreciate the skill and precision with which he went through the warm-up exercises and the progressive parts of the day’s instruction. It was a great class, and I could easily see that Mr. Son in person equaled the legends I had heard about him.**

**![A group of men in karate uniforms

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**Occasionally, the Grandmaster would conduct classes in New York’s Central Park. There would be huge crowds of spectators.**

**At the end of the class, Grandmaster Son’s assistant approached me. He was smiling as he said, “Mr. Son is very impressed with what he has seen of you, and he has decided to leave you as a green belt. You are a student at NYU, right?”**

**“Yes,” I replied, “I am a student at the law school.”**

**The assistant’s name was Steve; he grinned broadly when I affirmed that I was a NYU student. “Good. That’s good, because without a doubt Mr. Son wants you to become part of NYU’s intercollegiate Tae Kwon Do team.”**

**Frankly, I was taken aback because I’d never heard of any such thing as an intercollegiate karate team. However, I was pleased to accept Steve’s offer after he explained to me that the usual cost of taking the Tae Kwon Do course would be waived for the period that I was on the NYU team. Steve said “You’ll be on athletic scholarship, sort of. That’s unusual for a law student. Did you ever do any intercollegiate NCAA competition as an undergraduate?”**

**“No,” I responded, “at the University of Michigan, there was no intercollegiate team. Count me in,” I said enthusiastically. “I plan on coming to class as often as possible. Plus, frankly, I was more than a little worried about how I was going to pay for Tae Kwon Do classes. This place is expensive,” I quipped. Steve laughed, because the statement was true.**

**I always looked forward to Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Mr. Son was a great teacher of a very intense and deadly form of martial art. He taught powerful kicks and punches, as well as techniques for fighting against multiple assailants. The other students were a diverse group of young adults who were fun to be around. One student, Garrett Morris, was always playing the clown and cracking jokes. Later in life, Garret spent several seasons on television as a member of the cast of Saturday Night Live; the SNL role was followed by a role on the sitcom “Two Broke Girls.” Another student offered entertaining commentary, much like a TV sportscaster covering an event. He was hilarious.**

**Eventually, I compiled a very impressive record on NYU’s team. During my intercollegiate competitive career, I only lost one match and had many victories. And most observers would say that the match that I technically lost was an incident of robbery due to a bad call by the referee. During my career at NYU, in Tae Kwon Do competition, no opponent was able to hit me during a fight. I was never hit – not one, single time.**

**I also won a lady’s heart. At least for an afternoon in October 1970, I acquired a very pretty sports groupie. The team had just done a martial arts exhibition at NYU’s student center near Washington Square Park in Manhattan. Out of the blue, a woman walked up behind me and asked, “Does it hurt to break those wooden boards with your bare hands?”**

**I turned around to see who had spoken to me and answer her question. What a surprise. There was a very good-looking NYU student; she lived at NYU’s dormitory on Fifth Avenue. I recognized her because on Sunday evenings the law school’s dining room was closed, and the law students would eat dinner at the nearby NYU dormitory that was located near the foot of Fifth Avenue in Greenwich Village. I had seen her on several Sundays in her dorm’s dining room. I never forget a pretty face, especially when it’s atop a smoking hot body. So, I remembered her well from several Sunday evening visits to the Fifth Avenue NYU dorm.**

**“Well, no, it doesn’t hurt. Not if you do it right, but if you do it wrong, you might break your hand. I imagine that would hurt. You know?” Her name is Tracy Esquivel, and she genuinely laughed at my joking reference to breaking one’s hands trying to break boards.**

**“I heard that you’re the best fighter on the East Coast, and everyone expects you to go to the NCAA finals. Is that true?”**

**“Who on Earth told you that? Was it one of my paid public relations people?” She laughed again. I did not have any public relations people. And then, Tracy said in a matter-of-fact tone of voice, as she stared deeply into my eyes “Would you like to go back to my dorm room and have some real fun?” I paused for a second, thinking I’m not sure what she means by that, but I am certainly interested in finding out what she has in mind. Whatever she means, it sounds like fun to me, I thought, if Tracy was going to be there.**

**“Sure, let’s go,” I said without a second of hesitation.**

**A picture containing tree, sky, outdoor, city

Description automatically generated**

**Washington Square Park, Manhattan, New York City. The law school dormitory is 100 yards to the west of this photograph, and the Fifth Avenue NYU dorm is 150 yards north of the famous, white Tuckahoe marble Washington Square Arch in the center of the above picture. NYU Law School is 150 yards south of this photograph.**

**I loved the way Tracy dressed. I don’t care for super-casual. She was casual, but nothing was torn or faded; her colors were pastels and red tones, and that was very appealing to me, especially as contrasted to the autumn grey of New York City. I have a favorite type when it comes to women. I like smart, pretty women, who are fast, fancy, happy, and accomplished members of the opposite gender. Our conversation as we walked to her dorm demonstrated to me that she was all those things.**

**“I’m majoring in chemical engineering, and I have a minor in theater. I sing.” She was a sophomore at the NYU undergraduate school. “What specialty are you going to pursue as a future lawyer?” I was always happy to tell a questioner that I was interested in international corporate work. She seemed impressed. “That’s the first time one of the Black law students has told me that. They usually say criminal law or divorces – something like that.” She paused for a few seconds, and then asked, “Do you speak Spanish?”**

**“Yes, I can speak a little Spanish and French, as well. But sometimes I get the two mixed up and start a sentence in one language and then finish in the other language. So, I’m not fluent in either.”**

**She added, “I learned Spanish from my parents. They’re from Cali in Colombia, but I was born in Connecticut.” Her English grammar was perfect; but she did have a sometimes-detectable Spanish accent in her voice. However, she used the expressions common among African Americans. She described her family’s principal ethnicity as being African, but she was very light skinned, like my mother. She had long hair almost to her waist, but this afternoon her hair was pulled up inside a floppy red hat.**

**We waited at a traffic light. Tracy said, “There is something I must tell you. I have a long-time boyfriend. I’m being very naughty here this afternoon. Is that, OK?” I was surprised by that revelation.**

**“He’s not anyone I know, is it?” She didn’t say a name. “He lives in Queens, but his family is from Colombia in South America” she said, “Any chance you know him?” I answered that I knew no one in Queens. In fact, I didn’t even know where Queens was located. I told her that I was new to the City. “I am good if you feel comfortable with your course of action here. When I know you better, we should talk about all that.”**

**Ten minutes later, we were in her dorm room, and she said, “Sit here,” motioning to a chair next to her bed, “I want to feel the fire. Don’t you?” The next two hours passed quickly. Sweet music played softly in the background on a continuous loop. I liked her choice of songs. It is always important to me that my woman likes good music – preferably vocals.**

**Fade to grey**

**Other students quickly became friends. All the law students would spend time daily in the law school dining room. Eating and discussing all kinds of topics – classes, current events, sports, haircuts – anything. As the semester progressed, the Black students migrated towards a certain table. Sometimes I wondered whether the White students felt excluded from the “Black Table.” There were no exclusions based on race. All you had to do to qualify for the Black Table was to be one of the cool kids. If you were cool, then you could sit at the Black Table; that’s all that was required. So, of course, some Whites also sat there from time to time.**

**Amanda Richardson often shared our table, in part because Amanda’s roommate in the dorm was a Black woman named Ruby Greene. Ruby was the girlfriend – and eventually the wife -- of a third-year Black law student named Peter Sherwood.**

**A person in a suit and tie

Description automatically generated**

**Peter Sherwood in 2019, following his tenure as the Solicitor General of the State of New York. Solicitor General is the fourth highest ranking office in the New York State government. Peter was the first Black man to hold that prestigious position.**

**One evening I approached the usual dining room table and noticed that a small cluster of shy, White male students were eyeing Amanda and Ruby from a distance. That happened a lot because both Amanda and Ruby were very attractive women.**

**Law student Antonio Brandveen was seated next to Amanda, and the two were joking about the reputation of NYU professor Herbert Peterfreund. Antonio said, “Peterfreund likes failing people taking his course called New York Practice. He probably makes notches on his office desk.” Everyone laughed as Ruby, Amanda and I vowed to fearlessly take the infamous New York Practice course in our final year at NYU.**

**A person in a suit and tie standing at a podium

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**Judge Antonio Brandveen after years on the New York State Supreme Court bench**

**Law school was not difficult once the student learned the ropes. By week six of classes, I had staked out my favorite place to study in the library. I was so habitual, and I even had my usual seat at the Black Table in the law school dining room for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Mealtime was the best time for socializing with the other law students.**

**It was late October, and this was going to be my first New York City house party. A fellow first-year law student, Henrietta Turnquest, had invited me to a get together at her uncle’s house in Harlem. It was Saturday night, and I was due to have some fun, because for the last two months I had done nothing, but study and Tae Kwon Do – and there was one afternoon escapade with Tracy Esquivel. Tracy’s roommate explained to me about two weeks after that afternoon, “That was revenge sex, but Tracy and her cheating boyfriend have reconciled. Tracy has moved in with him in Queens.” Consequently, that was that. Tracy told me in advance that there was a backstory. No hard feelings on my part. In fact, I would stumble into Tracy again in Manhattan in 1974 and in San Francisco in 1998. And then again much later in life in South America.**

**A close-up of a person smiling

Description automatically generated**

**Henrietta Turnquest was a member of the Georgia State legislature from 1990 – 2002.**

**By the age of 21, I had become a stickler for getting places on time. On time literally being right on time; not five minutes early and not a second late. I knocked on Henrietta’s door about ten seconds before the time she said I should arrive.**

**Henrietta was ready to go. I was pleased because oftentimes women are nowhere near ready to go at the time that they ask you to pick them up. Henrietta said, “A friend of mine is coming with us. She should be here in just a minute or two.” No sooner than a few seconds after Henrietta had spoken those words, there was a knock on the door. I was standing in the center of the room as Henrietta opened her dorm room door.**

**Henrietta said to a sister as she entered the room, “Hi, Irene, come on in.”**

**I took one look at Henrietta’s friend and was stunned. The woman was beautiful. I said to myself “Walter, you can stop looking for a girlfriend right now. That’s her right there.”**

**“Walter, this is my friend, Irene Smalls.” In retrospect, I am almost surprised that I heard her name because I was busy trying to take it all in at one time with my eyes. Irene was smiling as she walked into the room. “This is Walter Lewis,” said Henrietta, “He’s one of the first-year students. We have a couple of classes together.”**

**There was some small talk; I really don’t remember what was said. But I will never forget the night I met Irene. I’ll never forget the subway ride to Harlem. The train wasn’t crowded; there were plenty of seats. Henrietta was sitting on one side and Irene was sitting on my other side. The train stopped at a station, so for a few seconds it was quiet. Henrietta leaned towards me and whispered, “Irene was Miss Black New York State in the Miss Black America pageant in August.” I heard her clearly even though Henrietta was not speaking loudly. My immediate thought was, “Wow, that is not surprising. Look at her.” Just a very straightforward immediate reaction. “Sure enough? Wow, well I can see that being the case,” I said back to Henrietta.**

**I turned to Irene and said, “Henrietta just told me you were in the Miss Black America pageant. That’s great. I saw you on television. I didn’t remember right away, but now I remember you. You were great. You were there with the Delfonics when they sang their hit song.” I was referring to the Delfonics singing group who performed** [**“La La Means I Love You”**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=baNbyst7aW0) **at the pageant.**

**I can’t remember Irene’s exact words in response, but I remember how they felt – how they made me feel. She was warm and modest and well-rounded and happy all within her response. We had a great time at the party. Irene spent the night at Henrietta’s room in the dormitory. The following day, I arose early and put in a few hours of studying before noon. It is easy to work long hours when you are happy, and I was happy from the night before. Plus, I was happy because I was learning the laws I wanted to know about in depth.**

**Irene and I got together, as we had planned, for lunch that Sunday in the early afternoon. and said, “Irene was in the Miss Black America contest. She is Miss Black New York.”**

**She was so nice at lunch. I was trying her name on for size in my mind, “Mrs. Irene Smalls Lewis.” After lunch, we went back to the law school dorm for the afternoon. I really don’t know how all that followed happened – how things cascaded so very quickly. I decided to tell Irene the truth about my feelings for her.**

[**“Can I Make A Dream Come True?”**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ERAZXCEkKvo)

**Fade to grey**

**Irene told me months later that Henrietta said she could see that the two of us had hit it off well that evening of the party in Harlem. Henrietta called Irene a day or two after the Harlem party and said, “Be sure you take it slow. There’s plenty of time to get to know each other before jumping into bed.” In response, Irene feigned agreement, “Sure, taking it slow is the way to go. For sure, always go slow.” Henrietta’s advice was already too late because that ship had sailed hours after we met. But neither Irene nor I would ever want to change how our relationship started.**

**Hours went by on that first Sunday before I took her home to an apartment in Spanish Harlem. Irene’s sister and brother were home, as was her godmother. Yvonne, Irene’s teenage sister, had a toddler as well as a newborn. All five people were living in her godmother’s two-bedroom apartment. Her godmother was not a relative, she had elected to take care of Irene, her sister and brother when Irene’s actual parents abandoned their parental roles years earlier.**

**Irene was in her last year at Cornell University. Cornell, located in Ithaca, New York, was more than 200 miles away from New York University. In retrospect, the distance was probably ideal because I needed to study and so did she. However, we would see each other as often as possible, but that was only every few weeks when she traveled to New York City to visit her family. And she came to visit me.**

**The first time that Irene entered the NYU law school dining room she created quite a buzz. She wore a powder blue knit, figure-hugging dress. The dining room table was crowded that evening, and the chairs on either side of me were taken by others. Henrietta was seated at the opposite end of the twelve-person rectangular table. There was a vacant seat next to Henrietta, so Irene walked up to the table greeted Henrietta and sat down. When she first sat down, she didn’t wave or say anything to me because she and I were out window-shopping together just 20 minutes beforehand.**

**None of my student friends had ever seen Irene before and Henrietta introduced my sweetie to the students seated close by without mentioning my name. The table fell silent; all the unmarried guys seated there were staring at Irene. And then three or four of the single guys verbally pounced on her with flowery, adoring attention. If this had been a TV sitcom, the next two minutes would have been hilarious, because two guys immediately asked her out on dates, a third student presumed she was an entertainer, and a fourth was about to propose marriage.**

**“So, Irene, are you a student here at NYU?” said one of the single guys seated nearby. “No, I’m a senior at Cornell,” she responded.**

**“Is that right,” he said. Great, great. Are you free for dinner tomorrow? I would love to hear about Cornell.” Single guy #1 was quickest to the draw. Irene answered, “Actually, my family is having guests over for dinner tomorrow. I can’t miss that.”**

**Single guy #2 didn’t hesitate a second, “Irene, I can’t help but notice your fine Afro, and those earrings really set it off. Why don’t we get to know each other better over lunch tomorrow?” Single guy #3 cleared his throat and said, “Are you in the Cornell theater department?” Before Irene could answer, Single guy #3 started telling her about his lifelong struggle to find his perfect soulmate so he could finally settle down with one woman and get married.**

**Leroy Richie was seated across the table, and he was single, but Leroy was in a committed relationship, and more important, Leroy did not do impulsive leaps off buildings. Leroy was talking with Robert Johnson about a ruling recently handed down by the New York Court of Appeals. Leroy quipped about the court’s holding, “That’s the thing always. People see what they want to see. If they don’t want to see something, nobody is more blind.” Years later, when Leroy was appointed General Counsel of Chrysler Corporation in Detroit, surely his sense of reserve had served him well during his law career. Leroy continued eating and did not say a word regarding Irene’s arrival beyond a genuinely friendly “Hello”.**

**A person in a suit and tie

Description automatically generated**

**Leroy Richie, General Counsel, Chrysler Corporation in 1998**

**The situation was set: Single guy #2 was awaiting an answer, while smiling from ear to ear, Single guy #3 was grinning and nodding his head in the affirmative up and down, and Single guy # 4 was explaining what he wanted in a soulmate, which emphasized personality and sound character. Irene sighed for a second and said, “Wait a minute, wait,” as she pointed in my direction, “I’m Walter’s girlfriend.” At that moment, all heads turned in unison towards me. I was chuckling and shook my head slowly in the negative. “God, you New York guys don’t waste any time, do you?” I said in jest. Everybody laughed, except single guy #2. Single guy #2 looked like he was embarrassed half to death. After that, the single men stopped staring at Irene and only stole glances whenever they felt no one would notice.**

**Robert Johnson was seated next to me; he whispered, “Where did you meet her?” I responded, “Henrietta introduced us a few weeks ago.”**

**Since he had not embarrassed himself like the others, Leroy Richie asked an ordinary question: “Irene you look very familiar, have you spent a lot of time around NYU?” Her answer was negative, and she did not add any explanation. There was a reason why Irene sometimes looked familiar to strangers. During the 1970’s, Irene was in Ebony magazine multiple times in a two-page advertisement for Afro Sheen hair care products. Plus, a huge picture of her, and several other women, advertising Afro Sheen was on the wall in many Black barbershops and most Black beauty salons across America.**

**There was another time when people around Irene would act like they were in a sitcom. However, in this second escapade, it was women who were providing the comedy. In 1972, Irene and I visited my family in Atlanta. Friends of my parents were having a party in their home; there were dozens of invitees, including the two of us. When we entered the party, I did not notice anything out of the ordinary. However, the next day I heard, through the grapevine, this narrative: “You should have seen those wives and girlfriends act up when Irene walked into the room. Just about all the women grabbed their man and would not let go of him. Apparently, the women were afraid that their man was going to dump them and run over to Irene like she was a human vacuum. One look – that’s all it took. Most of them turned green with envy.” I wish that I had noticed the scene at the time, because I like to have a good laugh.**

**By the summer of 1971, Irene had graduated from Ivy League Cornell University and was living in New York City. Her godmother, sister and brother were true friends. Her godmother cooked dinner for me many times, and Yvonne was such a spirited teenager, complete with two cute kids. Her brother provided an opportunity to be a good role model, because he was watching and learning.**

**Over the next three years, we were inseparable in our hearts.**

[**“Happy”**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtAk0tMGBMA)

**“Really,” I answered, “I can see why.” Henrietta laughed.**

**Irene and I were simpatico. All night we laughed at each other’s jokes and listened to each other’s stories. I had seen the Miss Black America contest on television during the summer, and I remembered seeing her on the show. In fact, I told her that I had been genuinely rooting for her.**

**She told me that she had a younger sister, Yvonne, and brother, named James, who were being raised by the same woman who raised Irene.. Irene said she seldom sees her mother or father, although her mother lives in New York City and her father owns a business in Harlem. I thought at first she was saying that she was raised by her grandmother but I soon realized that she was saying “God Mother”; she had been raised by a woman who was at one time her babysitter.**

**She was going to Cornell on scholarship. “There is no other way that I could afford college without a scholarship. My parents don’t give any money, and God mother has no money. But we get along, as so many people do, the best we can.”**

**I told her that I had empathy, because “My parents were giving me so little money, that the people over at the food stamp place did not believe that anyone could survive in New York City on as little money as I was spending. I don’t even have telephone or a TV set.”**

**“So, we’re both poor?”she laughed. I answered, “Not if you count the amount of our scholarships as income, then figure out a way to not spend it on school.”**

**She looked at me for a second with a serious expression on her face “That sounds like something a lawyer might say. What kind of lawyer do you plan to be?”**

**“I want to do business deals, and work with stocks and bonds in the United States and abroad.”**

**We joked about so many things. The way people dressed – bell bottom pants were such a waste of material. We both agreed that we had probably never been to church in our lives on our own free will. I told her how the fact that I was a good dancer had played a tremendous role in my social life, because people thought that I probably liked to party as much as they did, when in fact if they knew me better they would probably think that I study way too much. Plus, I explained, “In Detroit, as a child if you could not dance the other children would not play with you, because, obviously, there was something seriously wrong with you.” She laughed and said, “That’s true in Harlem too.”**

**I asked her, “Can you sing?”**

**“A little. I’m okay, but I would not be lead singer material.” I would find out later that she was being modest. She really should have picked a good song for her talent piece in the 1970 Miss Black America contest. Instead she did a dramatic skit that was not well-received by the audience.If she had chosen to sing a song rather than that dramatic skit, I suspect that she would have placed in the top three.**

**“Why do you study so much?” she asked with a quizzical expression on her face. “I study a lot because I want to learn what is being taught,” was my simple answer.**

**New Yorkers keep late hours, so by the time we left the party and arrived back at the dormitory it was very late at night. Irene was spending the night with Henrietta. I suggested that Irene and I have lunch together later that day – it was already Sunday morning.**

**Irene knew New York as a fearless New Yorker. Irene would even ride the subway at night by herself, although, I would fear for her safety whenever she did that. Irene would say, “You must look out for the bad guys. Particularly, the heroin junkies. The dangerous junkies were not the people who were nodding in semi-consciousness on the street corners or on the subway. The nodding junkies were harmless at that time. It was the junkies who were wide-awake and on the prowl for something to steal who were dangerous to others.” And there were tens of thousands of junkies in New York City in the 1970’s. They were all over the place, especially in Black Harlem and in Spanish Harlem.**

**Irene used to preach “You must look at the junkies’ hands and their forearms. Don’t bother to look for needle tracks. They cover up the needle tracks. You look to see whether their fingers and wrists look swollen. They look swollen, thick – kind of stiff. That is the true give away.”**

**In 1971, all of Harlem was playing Marvin Gaye’s mega-hit album and especially the title song** [**“What’s Going On”.**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-kA3UtBj4M) **Walking down almost any sidewalk in the Black or Latino neighborhoods of New York City, block after block, you would hear Marvin’s voice raising perplexing and inscrutable issues regarding our existence in America:**

**Mother, mother  
There’s too many of you crying  
Brother, brother, brother  
There’s far too many of you dying  
You know we’ve got to find a way  
To bring some lovin’ here today, yeah**

**Father, father  
We don’t need to escalate  
You see, war is not the answer  
For only love can conquer hate  
You know we’ve got to find a way  
To bring some lovin’ here today**

**Picket lines and picket signs  
Don’t punish me with brutality  
Talk to me  
So you can see  
Oh, what’s going on (What’s going on)  
What’s going on (What’s going on)  
What’s going on (What’s going on)  
What’s going on (What’s going on)**

**Right on, baby  
Right on, baby  
Right on**

**Mother, mother  
Everybody thinks we’re wrong  
Oh, but who are they to judge us  
Simply ‘cause our hair is long  
Oh, you know we’ve got to find a way  
To bring some understanding here today**

**Picket lines and picket signs  
Don’t punish me with brutality  
Come on talk to me  
So you can see  
What’s going on (What’s going on)  
Yeah, what’s going on (What’s going on)  
Tell me what’s going on (What’s going on)  
I’ll tell you, what’s going on (What’s going on)**

**Right on, baby, right on  
Right on, baby  
Right on, baby, right on**

**Or you would hear Marvin preaching a message about the self-destructive nature of heroin – called “the boy” in urban slang, “The boy that makes slaves out of men.” If popular music could solve social problems, drug addiction would have long ago become extinct. It takes more than rhythm and rhymes. It takes more than good intentions on the part of non-users or increased willpower among the population of addicted slaves. In any event, the attitude of the dominant White -society plays a role that has evolved tremendously over the decades, In the 1970’s, and earlier, heroin was chiefly a menace in low-income, non-White neighborhoods. Addicts were regarded as ruthless criminals who should be thrown into prison. Decades later in the 2000’s, when a whole variety of opioids are being widely abused in White neighborhoods, attitudes changed drastically. Now, the addicts are viewed as having a medical problem. There is no longer the demand that addicts be harshly imprisoned, without any plan for medical treatment, as was common back in the devastating heroin plague that ravished non-Whites in the 1970’s.**

**The following documentary – “Superfly: The True Untold Story of Frank Lucas The American Gangster” – is a very interesting, dramatic, documentary film. The documentary makes clear that Lucas was not only doing street sales in Harlem. In fact, Harlem was also the marketplace for wholesalers from around the United States to buy 60% of America’s heroin supply. The drugs would then be taken to other areas of the country after the purchase from Lucas – the Group’s street-level sales force – in Harlem. However, the documentary film does echo two profound errors. The documentary’s first error is the position that states “Frank Lucas cut the middleman out of the smuggling operation.” This refers to the fact that Frank Lucas ceased getting his supply of heroin from the Mafia. However, there still was a middleman bringing the heroin into the country. The new middleman was the Group – the corrupt Air Force pilots and transport airplanes flying in pure heroin from the Golden Triangle through Norton air base. The second error is the notion that the heroin was smuggled into the country in the body bags or caskets of dead soldiers. The actual location of the drugs on the aircraft during the smuggling flights was in locked compartments in out of the way places on the giant transport aircraft. The drugs were nowhere near the cockpit, caskets, or the cargo areas.**

[**This link is to a lengthy documentary film on the 1970’s: “Superfly: The True Untold Story of Frank Lucas -- The American Gangster**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFeVxBGVoJs)

**New York City in 1972**

**After graduating from Cornell University in 1971, Irene enrolled in the MBA program at the New York University Stern School of Business. We were both very short on money. While I was in law school, a Saturday night date with Irene had to be something very inexpensive because we were both very poor students. We would take a ride on the Staten Island ferry for the cost of a nickel in each direction. That was very entertaining; it was a very peaceful boat ride past the Statue of Liberty.**

**Sometimes we would go to the movie theater, but we seldom had enough money to go inside. Instead, we would go to Times Square where there were about 20 movie theaters clustered close together. All the theaters had television screens outside the theater where they played the previews of the movies that were playing on the big screen inside. We couldn’t afford to go inside, so we would just watch the previews and walk from one theater to the next doing just that – watching the previews of the films playing inside. In the early 1970’s there were many films aimed at the Black audience; these films were always filled with a lot of nudity and violence. Black people would always prevail in the end against drugs and the mob. However, on a truly critical level, the motion pictures were lacking on many levels with respect to cinematography and dialogue. However, they were exciting or funny, and there were a lot of them.**

**One thing is certain: Poverty does not doom a student to low grades in his law school classes. I received Honors grades in eleven of my law school courses. In fact, by my second year I was so confident of my performance that I decided to take a 30-hour a week job as a nighttime telephone switchboard operator for Sullivan and Cromwell, a very prominent, well-known Wall Street law firm. Being a nighttime operator was perfect, because through much of the night there were few phone calls, so there was time to study.**

**There was also time to help friends. Ruby Greene Sherwood and I took the dreaded New York Practice course under Professor Peterfreund during the summer term of 1972. After the final exam, Ruby and Peter left for a vacation in Greece, but Ruby was on pins and needles regarding her test performance. Ruby thought she had done well, but Peterfreund’s reputation as a grade point killer had her traumatized. Before Ruby left on vacation, she and I worked out a way for Ruby to know for sure that she had passed the final exam without paying for an expensive international phone call from Greece to New York City. Our plan: Ruby would make a collect call from Greece to the Sullivan and Cromwell switchboard late in the evening when I was the only switchboard operator. Ruby would ask for a fictitious person, by way of the telephone company operator. Our plan worked perfectly. The phone call came in at the planned time. The telephone company operator said: “I have a collect call for Sidney Jones Williams. Is he available?” I immediately realized the fictitious name and responded using the code Ruby and I had devised before she left for vacation. “Mr. Williams passed through here a few minutes ago, but he is gone now.” I heard Ruby yell out an exclamation of joy 5,000 miles away --“I passed!”, as the telephone operator quickly terminated the phone call. I suspect that the telephone company operator immediately realized that Ma Bell had been ripped off by sneaky students who were trying to save a few dollars.**

**Marguerite Washington was a member of the NYU Law Class of 1974. Marguerite was a great friend in law school and afterwards. She is half Black and half Shinnecock. The Shinnecock Indian Nation are historically Algonquian-speaking Native Americans based at the eastern end of Long Island. Marguerite excelled – she was a career inside counsel for a Fortune 500 company in New York City.**

**I also audited courses in NYU’s economics and computer departments. Frankly, once you got the hang of it, law school was easy. And to prove that fact, I graduated NYU Law School Magna Cum Laude in January 1973. As a member of the Accelerated Program where I completed the degree in 2-1/2 years, rather than the usual three years. However, NYU did not give such Latin Honors due to a theory that those with lower grades would be depressed if they did not also get a cum laude handle on their degree.**

**In September 1972 I took my first career job interview with the law firm of Dewey, Ballentine, Bushby, Palmer and Wood. Their offices were in a skyscraper on Broadway near Wall Street. With almost 200 attorneys, the offices spanned several floors near the top of the Marine Midland Bank building. The offices were magnificent with stylish modern furniture and panoramic views of New York City outside the floor-to-ceiling picture windows. The artwork on the walls was worth millions. The library and conference rooms were like scenes from a Hollywood production.**

**A picture containing building, sky, outdoor, skyscraper

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**140 Broadway, where my office was on the 44th floor of the Marine Midland Bank skyscraper.**

**The Dewey Ballantine partners offered me a job as an associate in the corporate law field upon graduation, and I accepted their offer. I let them know that I owed the Air Force four years of my time, but the partners assured me that was no problem. “If you’re called onto active duty, just come on back when your service is over,” was the position taken by the firm. What a relief, I was concerned about whether my Air Force commitment was going to be a problem.**

**It was New Year’s Eve on the verge of 1973. I was in the kitchen with Irene’s godmother, and everyone else was in the living room. “Irene thought you were going to give her a ring for Christmas,” Godmother said to me in a low voice. It was obvious that she didn’t want anyone else to hear. I was surprised by what she said, because I had never even hinted that an engagement was about to happen.**

**“You mean an engagement ring?” I whispered. She could tell I was surprised by her revelation to me.**

**“Yes, an engagement ring. Life is short. Ya’ gotta hurry,” she said smiling and walked out of the kitchen. I never felt Godmother was pressuring me towards marriage. She just wanted me to know something that Irene would not tell me. When I reflect on that night, I realize how much I have changed over the decades. If I had the chance to do that night again, I would have immediately bought Irene an engagement ring and proposed.**

**I graduated from law school under the Accelerated Program in January 1973 and took the New York State Bar examination in February 1973. My days of poverty are over. And thanks in part to the fact that I worked 30 hours a week during much of law school, as well as the financial help from the Tae Kwon Do scholarship, I did not have a very large amount of student loans. The amount was tiny when compared to the burden carried by most graduates.**

**I moved out of the dormitory into a furnished apartment in lower Manhattan. The building was old and nothing fancy, but that was okay, since there was no lease. I figured I would probably not be living there very long, since my Air Force duty was looming. I was on the third floor and there was no elevator. I had no idea on the day that I moved into the apartment that I would regret, in one way, for years to come having lived there.**

**As it turned out, the bed in the apartment had a lousy mattress. After just one night’s sleep, I was plagued with back pain problems that went on for 14 years. It also probably did not help that the floor in the apartment was on a downward slant so that my head was lower than my feet while I was lying in the bed. Years later I would discover that a sloped floor alone in the bedroom would give me back pain.**

**Dewey Ballantine, like any Wall Street law firm, was bound to be a lot of hard work. That was fine with me because the work was the specialty I was interested in practicing. There were many days when the hours were long, but that was not a problem. For one thing, I was used to working long hours. After all, during law school between working and studying the hours had been very long, and the net pay was very little.**

**About Dewey Ballantine, I’ll never forget the time when Richard Harrison and I were sitting at our desks; we shared an office on the 44th floor. It had a magnificent view of Manhattan and the Hudson River. It was a day like any other up until the point that René Bridges walked up to my desk. René was an attorney from Dewey Ballantine’s office in Paris; she was originally from Minnesota but had studied law in Paris before joining Dewey Ballantine. She was very popular in part because she was a very competent attorney and had a pleasant personality. Part of the reason for her popularity was the fact that she was extremely pretty. Rene was a natural sandy brunette, with a heavenly tan. She had a very appealing, wholesome appearance. A look that reminded men of the pretty girl at school, who their mother would have approved of when they were growing up. She didn’t appear to be the type of person who was involved in any form of teenage scandal. Her body was superb; I was told that she was an avid tennis player and a competitive swimmer in her college years. She was in her twenties, and at the height of her feminine glory.**

**In fact, it was comical to watch attorneys steal glances at her when they thought no one would notice. On one occasion, I saw a lawyer who was so absorbed watching Rene walk up a staircase that he walked full speed into a wall. In another mishap, I saw two distracted attorneys collide with each other. That was embarrassing for the two men, because Rene noticed when that happened.**

**I had had several friendly conversations with René, but nothing beyond the ordinary. So, I was shocked when she walked up to my desk that afternoon and said, “Walter, I’m going to spend two weeks at an island in the Caribbean. Would you like to come with me? I guarantee it will be a lot of fun. A really good time.” There was a very definite twinkle in her eye. Rene**

**For a moment I wondered whether I had not understood her clearly, but rather quickly I decided to trust my ears. I was shocked. She was asking me to go on vacation with her; plus, she asked me to go to the islands with her right in front of Richard. I figured, as a woman she was not in the habit of asking men to go out on dates, especially a two-week date that would certainly involve hot sex in the tropics. Men have more experience in such things. If a man posed such a question to a woman, you could bet your bottom dollar that he would not do so in front of onlookers. For the simple reason that could be crushingly embarrassing, to put it mildly.**

**I quickly gathered my thoughts and realized there was only one good answer, “I’ll think about it and get back to you tomorrow.” Although I realized immediately that I would not do that, I did not want to raise any degree of embarrassment by telling her “No” in front of Richard. The next day, in private, I told her that I would not be able to go to the Caribbean with her, because I was in a relationship with Irene. But that was not the end of this comical incident. A few weeks later she came back to my office after her vacation and handed me a stack of vacation photos. Most of the pictures were of scenery. But some of the pictures were of Rene in sizzling bikinis. Plus, in a few pictures, Rene was beautifully topless, and in two shots, she was totally, gorgeously nude. One photo from the front while reclining and one photo from the back while walking. I looked at the stack of pictures and giggled uncontrollably inside, while thinking most people would not believe this is something that would happen at a strait-laced Wall Street law firm, like Dewey Ballantine. However, people are people. And people like to have fun. There is nothing wrong with having a lot of fun on vacation. That’s exactly the appropriate time for hot sex and water sports in a tropical paradise.**

**There was only one incident at Dewey, Ballantine that was negative, and that incident had nothing to do with the practice of law. Jerks would sometime take Irene’s kindness as a sign of weakness. Take, for example, an unpleasant event that happened at the annual Dewey Ballantine dinner dance for attorneys and their significant others. Many of the lawyers were asking Irene to dance, since they knew she was a celebrity. No problem, Irene was a good dancer, and she liked to dance. One of the White partners asked Irene to dance on a slow record. I did not see this, but while they were dancing the guy fondled Irene’s derriere. Later that night she laughingly told me what had happened. She described the man. It was a young partner at the firm who I had never met.**

**“We were dancing and everything was ordinary at first. A wall was behind my back, so no one could see. He lowered his hand and grabbed a handful. It was no accident,” she said. “I was smiling when I told him, ‘Let go, now! Or you are a dead man.’ Irene told me that the guy had a smirk on his face that exuded negativism. He then said, “What ya’ gonna do – tell Walter?” Irene answered, “Sure, I’m going to tell Walter later. But I am the one who is going to kill you right now on this dance floor,” while smiling all the time.**

**Irene was an actress, and she acted this part to the max, as she stated, “I am a third degree black belt in Tiger Kung Fu. Get your hand off of my butt or I am going to strike your throat with a Dragon Claw Power Hand. You will die from asphyxiation within two minutes. Right here on this dance floor.” Her assailant immediately withdrew his hand, and he stuttered noticeably as he said, “Sorry, I’m sorry. It was an accident. Sorry.” Irene told me she never stopped smiling, and she was sure that anyone watching would have presumed that all was well. I cracked up laughing because there is no such thing as Tiger Kung Fu and Irene is not a martial artist. Her acting skills scared the hell out of that guy. Situation resolved. No further action is needed.**

**Even though my apartment building left a lot to be desired, I will always remember very fondly the Rico family that lived on the second floor. The mother, her two teenage daughters, ten-year-old son, the two daughters of friends, as well as three nieces – all lived in one apartment. They were such great neighbors. They were from Colombia, and all eight of the young people were in school. Mrs. Carmen Rico on several occasions had Irene and I over for dinner. They were very hard-working, upbeat people. All the young ladies were very talented and wonderfully smart. Plus, all the women were extremely good-looking.**

**A picture containing grass, outdoor, tree

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**Carmen’s daughters**

**“Here come the Rico girls,” Irene said, pointing down the street as she and I sat in a taxi that was stopped at a streetlight. Six of them were walking down the sidewalk together. And they were stopping pedestrians on the sidewalk and cars in the street.**

**“Hey babies tell me your names. Can I choose one?” a man shouted. Not one of the six stunning women slowed her stride or even glanced in his direction.**

**Irene said “New York men are a mess with that type of attention. I don’t know why. It never gets a man anything but ignored.”**

**We met the six women at the front door of the building. At street level they were speaking English, but by the time they reached the second floor they were speaking Spanish. They were at home, and they knew that Irene and I could understand what they were saying.**

**All the women were studying at colleges in New York City, and they were all top students in very difficult fields, like mathematics. physics, engineering, and medicine. The dedication to their studies was inspiring, as was the fact that Mrs. Rico had fashioned a dormitory in her apartment. She created a positive and protective environment, which was so important for young women studying in New York City. They just adored Irene. Not one of them ever said anything suggestive to me; they respected my relationship’s exclusivity with Irene. Irene was able to answer a question that we had discussed in passing on a couple of occasions: How do all those girls fit in a small, three-bedroom, New York City apartment? Irene was in their bedroom for a few minutes one evening as the college students prepared for the weekend. Irene reported later that I was right, “They have bunkbeds and three bathrooms.” Mystery solved.**

**One day, Carmen told me something that was endearing. Her ten-year old son had told her that he wanted to be a lawyer, “Like Mr. Walter and do business things all over the world. Just like Mr. Walter.”**

**When Carmen told me what Juan had said she started crying. I understood she was happy that Juan had high goals and was following a positive role model. Juan had never met his father. Mrs. Carmen Rico was a widow; her husband died in a traffic accident two weeks before Juan’s birth.**

**Carmen spoke on several occasions about why she decided to help Colombian students studying in New York. “It is the right thing to do. There is a need. My friends in Colombia know that there is supervision over their daughters here. They know that their daughters are safe and encouraged to do well.”**

**I asked her, “It seems like this would be a lot of work.” She laughed and responded, “They ain’t heavy. They’re my sisters” We both laughed because I realized that she had tweaked and recited the lyrics of a recent popular song. Then she surprised me, because she sang part of the song acapella. I didn’t know that she could sing.**

**“Carmen, you sang that song better than the Hollies,” I said, half joking. She answered, “That’s not hard to do. It’s a folk song. You know that genre is not very demanding on the vocals.” I nodded my head in agreement. “That’s true,” I said, “I can’t sing a difficult vocal, but I can almost sing a folk song.”**

**Carmen looked surprised, “You’re kidding right? You’re being modest, you can sing. You have such a nice voice.” I assured her that my singing voice is best when it is unheard. “Thanks for the compliment about my speaking voice, but – no – I can’t carry a tune in a bucket.” She laughed because that was the first time she had ever heard that comical expression. “That saying is from Detroit,” I added, “It applies to all six people who grew up in Detroit during the 1960’s who can’t sing. I’m one of the six.” Carmen laughed out loud, and shouted out to Irene who was in the next room, “Hey, Irene, can Walter sing?” Irene responded without any hesitation, “No, Walter can’t sing at all. He can’t carry a tune in a bucket.” Carmen laughed even louder. “Wow, I did not know that. That’s very surprising.”**

**Later that evening, Carmen asked, “Can you sing, Irene?” Irene hesitated for a few seconds, and I was paying close attention, wanting to hear how she would answer. “Well, Carmen, I don’t sing all that well, really. But I can carry a tune in a bucket.” Everyone at the dinner table that night cracked up laughing. I realized for the first time that my neighbors did not know that Irene had finished in the Top Four finalists in the Miss Black America pageant three years beforehand, in 1970. I used to tease Irene from time to time about the pageant, since I saw her on television while I was packing to leave Ann Arbor. Also watching that evening were my roommates – Sam, Wayne, and Willie. We all agreed that Irene was a sure shot to win first place until the talent portion of the evening.**

**Irene acted out a four-minute scene from John Steinbeck’s “The Grapes of Wrath”. The effort fell flat, and she dropped out of first place. The irony was this: Irene has a great singing voice – she could sing any song just like the record. I would sometimes say to Irene: “Why did you do that acting stuff? Why didn’t you just sing some popular record?” Irene would slowly shake her head from side to side when I asked that question. She would sigh and answer: “Well, I liked the Steinbeck, and it seemed like a good idea at the time.”**

**It was so much like Irene to modestly downplay the fact that she had a professional quality singing voice. Plus, she had been around the Rico’s on several occasions, and the item of information – the fact that she had been Miss Black New York State in 1970 – had never been mentioned by her to the family.**

**She would never brag about her many stellar accomplishments in life. That was one of the reasons why everybody liked Irene – because most people who knew her did not know that she was a star. For example, Irene never told me that she had been in a commercial with Richard Roundtree; he was one of the biggest Black male leads in Hollywood back in that era – he was Shaft.**

**Usually, the only sound you would hear coming from the Rico apartment was the sound of laughter. But one weekend in June, Carmen hosted a party for the summer season, after the close of the academic semester. There was food, music, comedy, and dancing for the entire neighborhood. It seemed like hundreds of people took part in a weekend-long festivity. At one point I realized that the familiar face on the other side of the room was Tracy Esquivel, who was with her Colombian husband. We smiled, but we did not speak.**

**Many years later, I ran into four of the Rico girls farther down the road of life, and they were highly successful in their fields. All the people in the second-floor apartment shatter the stereotype I hear so often implied in the American media about our neighbors to the south of our border. Like so many stereotypes in American culture, non-Whites are painted as a very negative picture, even when the reality is vastly different. In 2025 America, the word “Colombian” is frequently viewed as synonymous with “Colombian drug cartels.” However, my impression of Colombians will always be linked to Carmen Rico. I am not a believer in the propaganda generated concerning Mexico and Colombia, as well as the other countries south of our border. However, the stereotypes so frequently spewed by the White-centric United States of America dominates the global news media and entertainment.**

** Three Central American migrants I photographed in Tijuana in 2019. The right-wingers think they have come to destroy America. Those two kids look sinister to the right-wingers. So does Mom, according to some in America.**

**In early 1974, Irene, Mary Black and I were walking back to Mary’s apartment after dinner at a Upper Manhattan Cuban restaurant. Mary Black was a NYU Law School graduate in January 1973.**

**We were strolling along Columbus Avenue in Manhattan when we ran across a new bookstore. The name of the store was Seize the Time, and it was small by New York standards. I investigated the store through the windows and saw that its theme was books that had a left-wing focus. We went inside to look around. I took several books off the shelves for a glance, but only one book really caught my attention. The title of the book was** [**“The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia”**](https://www.amazon.com/Politics-Heroin-Southeast-Asia/dp/0060129018/ref=sr_1_2?crid=1AXV171C2S1MG&keywords=the+politics+of+heroin+in+Southeast+Asia&qid=1661589628&sprefix=the+politics+of+heroin+in+southeast+asia%2Caps%2C119&sr=8-2) **by Alfred W. McCoy. I took the book off the shelf and flipped it over so I could read its backside. There was an August 1971 picture of McCoy in the opium growing jungle of northern Laos. He was pictured with Meo hill tribe soldiers. McCoy was casually slinging an M-16 rifle up to his shoulder as the picture was snapped.**

**Text, letter

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**I turned to Irene “This guy is courageous. It takes real guts to go into Laos researching anything. That part of the world is dangerous. That takes real nerve.”**

**I was reminded of a day at the University of Michigan and a political science class I took on Southeast Asian politics. A student had raised an argument with the professor. The student said “Why is it that nothing is being said in this class about the tremendous influence of drug czars in the Golden Triangle region? There’s not a single word in our required reading. Nothing. Why is that?” The professor responded by brushing aside the questions as nonsense. “There is no tremendous influence of drugs on the politics of Southeast Asia. Anything said to the contrary is a fairytale.”**

**The thesis of the book I held in my hand apparently disputed the position asserted by my professor. I paged through the book. It looked very detailed. Fortunately, I was no longer poor. I could buy things on impulse. So, I bought the book, and over the course of several weeks, I read large parts of the text.**

**McCoy’s work is the authority on what was being done in Southeast Asia to create a drug production hegemony that produced a huge percentage of the world’s heroin in the 1960’s and 1970’s. I shall quote and paraphrase McCoy extensively over the next several pages.**

**As McCoy described so well in his seminal work, heroin is a relatively recent arrival on the drug scene, although the active ingredient in heroin, opium, has been known for its medicinal values for thousands of years, dating back to 4500BC, which is the Neolithic age. Like morphine before heroin was devised and raw opium before the invention of morphine, the chemicals in the opium plant were known as miracle drugs that had the ability to stop pain, ease anger and induce euphoria.**

**A single dose of heroin sends the average user into a deep, euphoric revelry. However, repeated use creates an intense physical craving in a human’s body chemistry, and it changes the average person into a slavish addict whose entire existence revolves around his daily dosage of heroin. If the drug is not obtained, sudden withdrawal from the drug can produce vomiting, violent convulsions, or fatal respiratory failure. An overdose on heroin cripples the body’s central nervous system, plunges the victim into a deep coma, and usually produces death within a matter of minutes.**

**McCoy despised heroin addiction because he felt, at the time he authored “The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia”, that heroin addiction destroys a man’s normal social instincts, including sexual desire, and turns the addict into a predator who might willingly resort to any crime to raise the money needed to maintain his drug habit. The addict— the junkie— will commit murder, armed robbery, resort to prostitution or whatever crime is necessary to raise money to buy heroin.**

**McCoy’s description of heroin’s chemistry is concise and understandable. I shall quote large segments of his text, beginning here:**

**“Heroin is a chemically bonded synthesis of acetic anhydride, a common industrial acid, and morphine, a natural organic painkiller extracted from the opium poppy. Morphine is the key ingredient, and its unique pharmaceutical properties are what make heroin so potent a painkiller and such a dangerously addicting narcotic. The acidic bond simply fortifies the morphine making it at least 10 times more powerful than ordinary medical morphine and strengthens its addictive characteristics.**

**“Scholars believe that man first discovered the opium poppy growing wild in mountains bordering the eastern Mediterranean at some point in the Neolithic age which spanned 8500 BC to 4500 BC. From its original home in the Eastern Mediterranean region, opium spread westward through Europe in the Neolithic age and eastward toward India and China in the early centuries of the first millennium after Christ.**

**“Down through the ages, opium continued to merit the admiration of physicians and gained in popularity. In 18th and 19th century England, opium base medicines were among the most popular drugstore remedies for such ordinary ailments as headaches and the common cold. Such widespread usage eventually resulted in a serious drug addiction problem.**

**“Ironically, it was the search for a non-addictive painkiller that eventually led to the discovery and popularization of heroin. In 1874, an English researcher named C.R. Wright synthesized heroin for the first time when he boiled morphine and acetic anhydride over a stove for several hours. After biological testing on dogs showed that the synthesized substance –diacetyl morphine –induced negative reactions in test animals, the English researcher wisely decided to discontinue his experiments. However, less than 20 years later German scientists who tested diacetyl morphine concluded that it was an excellent treatment for such respiratory ailments as bronchitis, chronic coughing, asthma, and tuberculosis.**

**“As importantly these German scientists claim that diacetyl morphine was the ideal non-addicting substitute to replace morphine and codeine. Encouraged by these results, the Bayer chemical cartel of Elberfeld, Germany, decided to manufacture diacetyl morphine and dreamed up the brand name “Heroin”, for its mass marketing campaign. Bayer wanted all the world to know about its new pain reliever and in 1898 it launched an aggressive international advertising campaign in a dozen different languages.**

**“Heroin was hailed as a miracle drug by medical experts around the globe; heroin was widely prescribed as a non-addictive cure-all, and soon became one of the most popular patent medicines on the market at that time. In 1906 the American Medical Association approved heroin for general use and advised that it be used as a substitute for morphine in various painful infections.**

**“Unrestricted distribution by physicians and pharmacies created an enormous drug abuse problem, and in 1924 federal narcotics officials estimated that there were 200,000 addicts in the United States. The deputy police commissioner of New York reported that 94% of all drug addicts arrested for various crimes were heroin users.**

**“The growing dimensions of heroin addiction finally convinced authorities that heroin’s liabilities outweighed its medical merits, and in 1924 both houses of Congress unanimously passed legislation outlawing the importation into or manufacture of heroin inside the United States. After a quarter-century of monumental heroin abuse, the international medical community finally recognized the danger of unrestricted heroin use, and the League of Nations began to regulate and reduce the legal manufacture of heroin.**

**“The Geneva Convention of 1925 imposed a set of strict regulations on the manufacture and export of heroin, and the Limitations Convention of 1925 imposed a set of strict regulations on the manufacture and export of heroin, and the Limitation Convention of 1931 stipulated those manufacturers could only produce enough heroin to meet legitimate medical and scientific needs. As a result of these treaties the world’s total legal heroin production plummeted from its peak of 9000 kilos in 1926 to little more than 1000 kilos in 1931.”**

**McCoy continued his history of the drug on page 5: “However, the sharp decline in legal pharmaceutical output by no means put an end to widespread heroin addiction. Aggressive criminal syndicates shifted the center of world heroin production from legitimate pharmaceutical factories in Europe to clandestine laboratories in Shanghai and Tientsin, China that were owned and operated by a powerful Chinese secret society. These laboratories started to supply vast quantities of illicit heroin to corrupt Chinese warlords, European criminal syndicates, and American Mafiosi like Lucky Luciano. In Marseille, France, fledgling Corsican criminal syndicates opened smaller laboratories and began producing for European markets and export to the United States.”**

**I had never read such specific information on drug trafficking prior to McCoy’s work.**

**McCoy continued: “The outbreak of World War II seriously disrupted international drug traffic. Wartime border security measures and a shortage of ordinary commercial shipping made it nearly impossible for traffickers to smuggle heroin into the United States.**

**“During wartime, the heroin syndicates attempted to stretch their supply of the drug by lowering the potency to less than 3% pure,” McCoy states on page 6. “As a result of all this, many American addicts were forced to undergo involuntary withdrawal from their habits, and by the end of World War II the American addict population had dropped to less than 20,000.”**

**McCoy continues on page 6: “But the disappearance of heroin addiction from the American scene was not to be. Within several years in large part thanks to the nature of US foreign policy after World War II, the drug syndicates were back in business, the poppy fields in Southeast Asia started to expand, and heroin refineries multiplied both in Marseille and Hong Kong.”**

**McCoy minces no words. He maintains that the United States inflicted the heroin plague on itself because the country’s foreign policy focused on a Cold War crusade. Leaders in both American political parties embraced an aggressive anti-Communist ideology. European labor movements and Asian nationalist struggles were deemed to be pawns of “international communism”, and therefore had to be undermined in the case of labor movements or destroyed in the case of any nationalist struggles for independence from colonial rule. The Central Intelligence Agency became the tip of the spear for America’s anti-Communist crusade. The CIA’s efforts often involved small numbers of well-financed agents sent to foreign countries to shape local political situations in a fashion compatible with American interests.**

**McCoy wrote on page 7: “In Sicily, the forerunner of the CIA, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), formed an alliance with the Sicilian Mafia to limit the political gains of the Italian Communist Party on this impoverished island. In France the Mediterranean port city of Marseille became a major battleground between the CIA and the French Communist Party during the late 1940’s. To tip the balance of power in its favor, the CIA recruited Corsican gangsters to battle communist strikers and backed leading figures in the city’s Corsican underworld who were at odds with the local Communists. Ironically, both the Sicilian Mafia and the Corsican underworld played a key role in the growth of Europe’s postwar heroin traffic and were to provide most of the heroin smuggled into the United States for the next two decades.”**

**McCoy describes the process of cultivating opium with a specificity found nowhere else, starting on page 9: “Despite countless minor variations, all of Asia’s poppy farmers use the same basic techniques when they cultivate the opium poppy. The annual crop cycle begins in late summer or early fall as the farmers scatter handfuls of tiny poppyseed’s across the surface of their hoed fields. At maturity the greenish colored poppy plant has one main tubular stem, which stands about three or 4 feet high, and perhaps half a dozen to a dozen smaller stems.**

**“About three months after planting, each stem produces a brightly colored flower. Gradually the pedals drop to the ground, exposing a green seed pod about the size and shape of a bird’s egg. For reasons still unexplained by botanists, the seed pod synthesizes a milky white sap soon after the pedals have fallen away. The sap is opium, and the farmers harvest it by cutting a series of shallow parallel incisions across the bold surface with a special curved knife. As the white sap seeps out of the incisions and congeals on the bulb surface, it changes to a brownish-black color. The farmer collects the opium by scraping off the bulb with a flat, dull knife.**

**“Most traffickers prefer to do their morphine refining close to the poppy fields, since compact morphine bricks are much easier to smuggle than bundles of pungent, jellylike opium. Although they are separated by over 4,000 miles, criminal “chemists” of the Middle East and Southeast Asia use roughly the same technique to extract pure morphine from opium. The chemist begins the process by heating water in an oil drum over a wood fire until his experienced index finger tells him that the temperature is just right. Next, raw opium is dumped into the drum and stirred with a heavy stick until it dissolves. At the propitious moment the chemists add ordinary lime fertilizer to the steaming solution, this precipitates out organic waste and leaves the morphine suspended in the chalky white water near the surface. After filtering the water through an ordinary piece of flannel cloth to remove any residual waste matter, the chemist then pours the solution into another oil drum. As the solution is heated and stirred a second time, concentrated ammonia is added causing the morphine to solidify and drop to the bottom. Once more the solution is filtered through flannel, leaving chunky white kernels of morphine on the cloth. Once dried and packaged for shipment, the morphine usually weighs about 10% of what the raw opium from which it was extracted weighed.**

**“The heroin manufacturing process is a good deal more complicated and requires the supervision of an expert chemist. Since the end of World War II and into the 1970’s, Marseille and Hong Kong had established themselves as the major centers for heroin laboratories. However, their dominance was challenged by a new cluster of heroin laboratories located in the wilds of Southeast Asia’s Golden Triangle. Most laboratories are staffed by three-man teams consisting of an experienced “master chemist” and two apprentices. In most cases the master chemist is really a “master chef” who has simply memorized the complicated five-part recipe after several years as an assistant.**

**“The goal of the five-stage process is to chemically bind morphine molecules with acetic acid and then process the compound to produce a fluffy white powder that can be injected from a syringe.**

**“Stage One. To produce 10 kilograms of pure heroin, the daily output of many labs, the chemists heat 10 kilograms of morphine and 10 kilograms of acetic anhydride in an enamel bin or glass flask. After being heated six hours at exactly 185 degrees Fahrenheit, the morphine and acid become chemically bonded, creating an impure form of diacetylmorphine (heroin).**

**“Stage Two. To remove impurities from the compound, the solution is treated with water and chloroform until the impurities precipitate out leaving a somewhat higher grade of diacetylmorphine.**

**“Stage Three. The solution is drained off into another container, and sodium carbonate is added until the heroin particles begin to solidify and drop to the bottom.**

**“Stage Four. After the heroin particles are filtered out of the sodium carbonate solution under pressure by a small suction pump, they are purified in a solution of alcohol and activated charcoal. The new mixture is heated until the alcohol begins to evaporate, leaving relatively pure granules of heroin at the bottom of the flask.**

**“Stage Five. The final stage produces the fine white powder prized by American addicts and requires considerable skill on the part of the underworld chemist. The heroin is placed in a large flask and dissolved in alcohol. As ether and hydrochloric acid are added to the solution, tiny white flakes begin to form. After the flakes are filtered out under pressure and driven through a special process, the result is a white powder, 80 to 99 percent pure, known as “Number 4 heroin.”**

**My reading of McCoy had taught me that the highest grade of heroin – the purest – carried the somewhat inconspicuous title “Number 4 heroin”. If I had to guess, my guess would have been that the most powerful heroin would be called “Number 1 heroin.” Number 1 heroin just seems to be a more fitting name for the World’s most potent opioid. At that point I had acquired an item of information that was seldom known by a person who was not in the DEA, FBI, or some other branch of law enforcement. In 1975, I remembered this information. Consequently, alarm bells sounded inside of my head when an agent of the Air Force Office of Special Investigations told me that Number 4 heroin was not a potent drug.**

**My last months in New York City**

**It was not until the late spring of 1974 that the Air Force called me onto active duty. By that time, I had been at Dewey Ballantine for more than a year. I was surprised that it took so long. I was very lucky, because the Air Force let me choose which air base I would be sent to, from a list of five possible choices. My assignment was to the base legal office at Norton Air Force Base in Southern California. I was ordered to report for duty at Norton in early July 1974.**

**Although my relationship with Irene lasted four years, things did not end in marriage. We drifted apart by the spring of 1974, and I foolishly started dating another woman – Virginia Hale -- who was a popular nightclub singer in New York City. The new woman had a beautiful face, a plush behind and gorgeous legs. She was perfect and new. New stuff that is worth dying for. Just ask any man – they will tell you: “stuff happens.”**

**Why did this happen? I don’t know why. In retrospect, I suspect the reason was temporary insanity. But a less harsh analysis would indicate that Virginia was a very nice woman who rightfully won the moment. In any event, 50 years later, I am still friendly with both.**

**Irene was in tears when she moved to Boston in mid-1974, but she visited me in California for just a few days in July 1974. Following that brief visit, three years would pass by before I would see her again in May 1977.**

**In February 1975, I married a bright and shiny Californian named Linda A. Linton. Linda was very impressed by the size of my Dewey Ballantine salary and the size of my investment accounts. Our marriage was short. In May 1977, Linda and I were in the midst of a fiery divorce, and Linda was in the process of taking my finances to the cleaners in divorce court. By the time the divorce dust settled, I was deeply in debt.**

**I met briefly with Irene in Boston in May 1977. Before I saw Irene, I visited her godmother in an assisted living home in Boston. Godmother had terminal cancer, but she was as feisty as ever. Irene’s godmother forewarned me: “Irene is seven months pregnant with her first child.” That information was new to me. Godmother then asked, “Walter, is that your aby in there?” I answered, “No, I haven’t seen Irene in three years,”**

**Godmother paused for a few seconds, and then said, “That is too bad. I hoped you were the father.” Godmother always said the nicest things to me. I was very saddened when she passed away in 1978, soon after the birth of Irene’s daughter. Eventually, we all have our turn to lay motionless in a coffin while our loved ones cry. It’s the circle of life.**

**CHAPTER SIX   
Norton Air Force Base  
Monday, July 8, 1974**

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**New 63d Military Airlift Wing C-141s parked on the ramp at Norton Air Force Base on a winter day in 1967.  One aircraft – Serial 66-0177 – is in the foreground. This aircraft will become the Hanoi Taxi that flew Bob Hope to USO shows in South Vietnam and in 1973, during the final days of the Vietnam War, repatriated American POWs from North Vietnam, including Arizona Senator John McCain. Aircraft a66-0177 today is on permanent display at the National Museum of the United States Air Force, which is in Dayton, Ohio.**

**Start of Air Force active duty**

**I was a little nervous that July morning. Among the many firsts, even though I was commissioned as an officer in the Air Force in 1970, this day was the first time that I had worn an Air Force uniform. A real Air Force uniform; not a ROTC uniform.**

**I wanted to get this part right, since I figured getting off on the best foot with the base Judge Advocate General would certainly be helpful. I remembered clearly what the ROTC instructors had taught us back at the University of Michigan.**

**I walked at attention into Lt. Colonel Clifton D. Blanks’ office, pulled to a halt in front of his desk, and then loudly recited, as I snapped a perfect salute, “Captain Walter Lewis reporting for duty, sir. As ordered, sir.”**

**Colonel Blanks was quick to respond. “Good to see you,” he said, with a genuine smile, as he saluted and then extended his hand. He was a tall Oklahoman, in his forties. I don’t remember where he went to law school, but in our first conversation I sensed that his legal career might have been entirely in the Air Force.**

**I feared that my commander would be some hardcore military fanatic. Colonel Blanks was not at all in that mode. He was likable from the very beginning.**

**“Have a seat,” he said with the hint of a Western drawl. “How was your trip cross-country?” As I expected, he knew a little about me. He knew that I was living in New York City and that I worked for a major law firm. Our conversation was relaxed after the initial military formality of reporting for duty. He called me by my first name, and that itself was a step away from the last name custom that is so common throughout much of the military.**

**The legal office at Norton was a far cry from Dewey, Ballantine’s spacious offices at 140 Broadway in New York City. Instead of a skyscraper, the Norton legal office was a small, single-story, wooden building. Instead of the canyons of Wall Street in lower Manhattan, Norton was on the edge of the Mojave Desert in Southern California, around 60 miles east of the outskirts of Los Angeles. Unlike the plush surroundings at 140 Broadway, the legal office was mostly grey metal cabinets and desks, drab linoleum floors, and there was no air conditioning. There was no air conditioning even though during the summer months the outside temperature would be above 90 degrees virtually every afternoon.**

**Colonel Blanks spoke jovially about what was expected of me as an Assistant Staff Judge Advocate. “One of the things that appeals to most young people is the fact that there will be few late nights or weekends tied up with work.” In many ways the position was the military equivalent of what in the civilian world would be an assistant district attorney or a fledgling Federal prosecutor. Colonel Blanks continued, “You will be doing both criminal prosecutions, as well as advising base personnel and their families on civil law problems most every afternoon.”**

**“That’s certainly different from what I’m used to,” I replied with respect to the prospect of few late nights or busy weekends. “So, I’ll be doing a variety of things?” I questioned.**

**Colonel Blanks explained that Assistant SJAs practice both civil and criminal law. “During the mornings, you’ll work on a variety of Air Force administrative matters, such as personnel problems, also criminal prosecutions, and investigations. In the afternoon, you’ll meet with clients, service members and their dependents, whatever their legal problems might be.” We could not represent these clients in civilian courts, but we could give them basic advice. We were not allowed to assist the service people with their own business ventures.**

**After twenty minutes of conversation, Colonel Blanks rose from his desk chair and said, “Let me show you around the office. Everybody is here. There are five lawyers, including you. How many lawyers were there at the firm you were with?”**

**“About 200 in New York and a half dozen in Paris,” I replied flatly, with full realization of the huge contrast between those numbers.**

**Colonel Blanks stared at me for a moment as we both turned towards the door leading into the hallway. I cringed inside, as I questioned for a fleeting moment whether my haircut was short enough, or whether my moustache was within Air Force regulations. The Colonel didn’t say anything; I was relieved. Apparently, I was not breaking any hair or moustache regulation.**

**The base legal office was an L shaped, single-story building. Bare-bones military was the order of the day. Most of the furniture was grey metal; the linoleum floor was drab. There were some bookcases in the hallway, but there were virtually no books, except for volumes of Air Force regulations. The fact there was no air conditioning was impossible to overlook from the very beginning, because even though it was before 8 AM, the temperature was already almost 80.**

**Plus, the air was thick with smog. The smog was so thick that you could not even see the mountain range located just a few miles to the east of the base. In fact, at opposite ends of the valley were massive mountain peaks. One peak to the east was San Gorgonio Mountain, standing 11,489 feet high. To the west was Mount San Antonio, in the San Gabriel range, standing more than 10,000 feet high. In the summer, the smog was so bad, a person standing at the door of the legal office would not even be aware that two of the tallest peaks in Southern California were only a short distance away. Instead, the surrounding area appeared as if one could see forever across a flat plain. It looked as if there was nothing in the distance in every direction, much like looking into a fog bank – a murky, grayish-tan fog bank. The smog was so thick that a person could taste it, and it did not taste good. Years later, I realized that I could distinguish a California orange from a Florida orange, because I could taste the flavor of smog in a California orange.**

**Within seconds, we approached a woman putting files into a cabinet. “Walter,” said Colonel Blanks, “This is Sergeant Shirley Phillips. She is the person who really runs this office.” The Colonel added with a chuckle. Sergeant Phillips extended her hand and smiled. She was a tall, nice-looking woman in her 30’s. The sound of introductions prompted others to leave their offices and come out into the hallway. The other three attorneys were all captains: Jim Wright, Rod Pratt, and Claude Wilson. There were also two additional sergeants –two men – who handled administrative duties. Everyone was cheerful and friendly. All four captains carried the title Assistant Staff Judge Advocate.**

**Everyone called the others by their first name, except for Colonel Blanks. When we addressed Colonel Blanks, he was always “Colonel Blanks.” All the attorneys were friendly and casual. That was all good and somewhat of a relief for me to see. It was a relief to see that the office environment was not a stiff military stereotype.**

**I was happy to hear that no one was saying “Yes, sir” and “No, sir”, and no one was marching around at attention, like in some John Wayne movie about the military. That part was going to be sufferable. But there was still the part about four years. I was going to be practicing areas of the law for four years that were a long distance from my preferred specialty. This was not the practice of business law and certainly not international corporate finance.**

**One of the most amazing things about being a lawyer in the Air Force in 1974 was the utter lack of resources available to do the work. The Norton legal office had very few reference books, and the 1970’s was decades before the internet. We would just do without. When I arrived in 1974, for questions regarding California divorces, we would answer on the authority of the Nolo Press paperback book “How To Do Your Own Divorce in California”, and for income tax questions, our authority was JK Lasser’s “Your Income Tax”. The county law library was available to the base attorneys, but it was miles away and seldom used.**

**The work week was five days long. In all my time in the Air Force, I doubt that I worked on more than three Saturdays. Never on Sunday. So, if doing very little work, doing a lot of guessing and very low standards are your thing, in the 1970’s, the Air Force was the place for you. Much of what we did was listen to the problems of clients and then refer the client to a civilian lawyer. Day after day was spent listening, offering a few words of advice, and then referring the person to a service operated by the county Bar association that would find them a civilian lawyer. By far, the most plentiful type of civil law case was a divorce featuring a spouse in tears.**

**Each month, I would meet with more than 75 clients. I quickly realized the need for a system to keep up with my conversations with such a huge number of people. I would make detailed, written notes on a legal pad during or immediately after a consultation or a phone conversation – any interaction of even minor importance. This system would make it possible to accurately recall any advice or facts that came across my desk. I called this system my “day notes.”**

**Starting out in military law can lead to embarrassment. Within my first few weeks, I had an initial consultation with a client who was in trouble with his commanding officer for failure to repair.**

**“Captain Lewis,” said the dejected looking airman sitting in front of my desk. “They have hit me with a failure to repair.” I had no idea what a failure to repair was, other than the apparent English meaning, so I responded with an appropriate serious expression: “What didn’t you fix?” Whoops. I had made a classic rookie mistake. A failure to repair is a form of AWOL – absence without permission to be away. It has nothing to do with fixing an airplane or fixing anything.**

**Another rookie mistake is wearing your flight/garrison cap backwards, not as a fashion statement, but as a blunder. The garrison cap was flat while not being worn, so the error was not hard to commit. However, there was a definite front and back; the wearer’s rank was on the front of the cap. A garrison cap on one’s head backwards would cause someone to point out the error of your ways, while fighting to hold back his laughter. This might happen at the front door of the base exchange – the military version of a small Walmart, probably with a lot of onlookers to observe the moment. I know the experience first-hand.**

**Without a doubt, my workdays were very different from New York City. So were my nights. After the many late nights at Dewey, Ballantine, it was heaven for the workday to end at 4PM. The sun was still high in the sky, and the Officers Club swimming pool was 200 yards from my front door at the bachelor officers’ quarters – the BOQ. For the first two weeks, I went to the pool every afternoon; it was such a novelty to have that clear blue water so close to home. Plus, the pool somewhat made up for the fact that I was brand new to the area and had no friends.**

**In 1974, the area around Norton air base was not at all metropolitan, although Norton was next to the small city of San Bernardino. To the north was the Mojave Desert and to the east was the Lower Desert heading towards Palm Springs. San Bernardino was more than 60 miles from the outskirts of Los Angeles, so calling San Bernardino a suburb would be a huge stretch. Large parts of San Bernardino were vacant lots that were filled with tumbleweeds.**

**New local friends were needed, and in fact within a month, I met two women, and a local social life was born. I also met Hank George, an Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity brother. Hank had been stationed at Norton for several years, so he knew people in the area.**

**I will never forget that certain sunny morning in September 1974. It had rained hard the night before. That was the first rain at Norton in months, and it cleared away the smog. When I looked outside, I could hardly believe my eyes. You could, for my first time, see for miles.**

**“Wow!” I exclaimed aloud, “Look at the mountains!” To the east and north, the base was framed by massive mountains. It looked like an entirely different world from the smog-heavy appearance of summer. It was still hot, but the smog was gone. Literally, overnight, there had been a complete transformation of my surroundings.**

**I lived in the bachelor officers’ quarters – the BOQ. That made for a very short drive to work, which was great. But that also meant that it was a very short distance to the runway from my apartment’s front door. Literally, four hundred yards away was the end of the runway, and, although Norton was not a particularly active base, the airplanes were noisy. The usual takeoffs and landings were the Lockheed C-141 Starlifter jet transport aircraft, with its four Pratt and Whitney turbofan engines. These were based at Norton with the 63rd Military Airlift Wing.**

**The C-141’s were noisy, and that was particularly true at the daily dawn take-off. The most fun part, when I was in bed trying to sleep, was when the airplane would taxi to the end of the runway and then just sit there for an eternity, apparently trying to make as much noise as possible before releasing its brakes and heading off to a circuit of stops at the American bases in Asia. Each day, at least one plane would return to Norton after visiting many of the American bases in Asia, delivering cargo and picking up deliveries slated for return to the States.**

**Since apparently no one in the Air Force was bothered by noise, the walls in the BOQ were paper thin. One Saturday, I could hear clearly when Hank George visited my neighbor’s BOQ apartment. The sound of Hank’s voice was clear as it penetrated the back wall of my apartment.**

**It was Saturday, and I needed something to do that night, so I figured this would be a good time to see what my neighbor and Hank had planned for the weekend. I know now that my decision to go clubbing with Hank that night was a turning point in my life, because I was about to meet my first wife. Hank introduced me to Linda – the future Mrs. Lewis. We met at Linda’s apartment in the nearby city of Riverside in late September 1974. For a second time in my life, I was struck at first sight when I met a woman. As was the case four years earlier when I met Irene, I was impressed with Linda from the very first sight.**

**Her name was Linda A. Linton, and she grew up in the local area. She was 23 and raised in a small city near Norton named Redlands. She graduated from the University of California campus in Riverside. She seemed to be everything I had always wanted. As it turned out, she was acting like everything I had always wanted. And she was a great actress.**

**A whirlwind romance followed, and we got married in February 1975, four months after the day we met. That was fast, plus we were apart for six weeks of that four-month period. It is not surprising, in retrospect, that I discovered a few months after our wedding that I married a stranger. We were very different people on many basic issues of importance to a married couple. One issue quickly manifested itself. Linda loved to spend money. I was by nature a saver, rather than a spender. When we married, I had a lot of savings for a person my age. We spent those savings in a few months, and as soon as that money was gone the arguments started. I suspect that our marriage was doomed soon after our wedding, but certainly a year later the handwriting was all over the wall on that issue. There were some good times; no mistake about that. Linda and I were very good together in the bedroom, and she was a great cook.**

**![A person and person posing for a picture

Description automatically generated with medium confidence]()**

**Captain Walter Lewis and Mrs. Linda Lewis near the White House in Washington, DC in July 1975**

**Linda and I had a nice vacation in the Bahamas a few months after our wedding. We spent the summer of 1975 in Washington, DC, because I was assigned to the White House as one of the staff attorneys for the Presidential Clemency Board. This was a great opportunity to vacation in New York City. We moved into a very nice apartment complex in Riverside named Hidden Springs. We had a two-bedroom, two story apartment home. The apartment complex was Linda’s choice. The street’s name was Pear blossom Drive, and both of us felt that name was so romantic. I was charmed by the fact that the complex was located on the edge of town, and I told my friends back in New York that you could film a cowboy movie down the street from our driveway. We bought a new car, a 1976 Datsun 280Z sports car. The car was my choice.**

**Colonel Blanks said on more than one occasion, that I was always on time for work until I got married, “Now you are always late each morning. Newlyweds,” he would shake his head in feigned derision, and everyone at the lunch table would laugh. You could tell that he was not concerned about me arriving at the office a few minutes late occasionally. After all, I was the most requested attorney in the office. Oftentimes, clients calling in for an appointment would specifically ask for me because previous clients had good things to say about me. Plus, my record on criminal defense was spectacular from the perspective of my clients. At one point, I had won seven acquittals or dropped charges in a row. One of the sergeants in the legal office said, “In the military, beating the rap is uncommon, so to have seven victories in a row is probably an Air Force record.” When the sergeant told me that item of information, I laughed since I thought he was joking. But then he said, “I’m serious. I’m not joking. That never happens.”**

**There was great horseback riding with friends in the Mojave Desert not far from Norton. We went snow skiing in the San Bernardino Mountains, where the air temperature was so warm some people would ski in swimwear. It seemed almost impossible, but powdery snow was on the ski slopes, even in balmy weather. Skiing in warmer than frigid conditions was a very Southern California phenomena.**

**So, there were good times. And Linda had many friends who were great to be around, but I learned a lesson that many spouses learn as a divorce nears: Her friends are your friends only during the time that the marriage is going well. When the marriage ends, those friendships will usually end abruptly.**

**A person wearing glasses

Description automatically generated with medium confidence**

**The continent’s best horseback riding was in the nearby Mojave Desert, but keep an eye on the lookout for the many extremely venomous Mojave green rattlesnakes.**

**There were good times, but arguments over money were becoming more frequent as the months passed. Plus, something happened the day before our wedding that hung over our marriage, because it raised the issue of trust. Linda and I were waiting at the county clerk’s office to have our marriage license issued. I was holding both our marriage license applications as we stood in line for our turn in front of the clerk. I glanced at Linda’s application and frowned in disbelief.**

**“Linda,” I said, “I think you made a mistake on your entry in the box where the form asks when your first marriage ended. You made a mistake here. You wrote that your first marriage just ended two weeks ago.” I knew that Linda had been married before, but Linda told me when we started dating that her divorce was final more than a year before we met. It was the day before our wedding that I discovered she had lied to me about when her divorce was final. In fact, when I proposed to Linda, I did not know that she was still married to her first husband. I felt scammed, and after that revelation I became very suspicious of the things she would tell me if the subjects were relationship sensitive. I knew she would lie if it was to her advantage. And I knew she could be a very convincing liar.**

**Chapter Seven**

**November 1975**

**Norton Air Force Base**

**There is no situation so bad that it can’t get worse.**

**“The guy’s name is Robert Dosek. He’s an airman in the maintenance squadron,” Colonel Blanks said. “He’s getting an administrative discharge for drug use and possession. He got caught receiving heroin in the mail that was sent to him from Thailand.”**

**To the best of my recollection, our conversation started in the hallway outside of my office, Colonel Blanks motioned with his hand for me to follow him to his office. While taking a seat in the chair in front of Blanks’ desk, I asked the question that sprang immediately to my mind, “Really, heroin?”**

**My recollection is this conversation took place in November, but it might have been late October 1975. I’m not certain of the date, in part, because I had already adopted the practice of taking notes on everything that happened during the day at or near the time any significant event occurred. I had adopted this practice because it was not at all unusual to work on more than a dozen different cases each day involving numerous conversations. It was just a lot more practicable to write extensive, complete notes rather than attempting to remember a ton of specifics. I did not try to memorize the details of daily interactions. However, most of my daily notes concerning the Robert Dosek case were stolen in 1978.**

**“Dosek was arrested in July by the San Bernardino police at his off-base house,” said Colonel Blanks as he sat behind his desk. “He got a package in the mail from somebody he knew in Southeast Asia. The folks over at the post office detected heroin in the package, and they set him up to be busted at the time the package was delivered. The commanders have pretty much already decided to discharge the man, but he’s entitled to an attorney interview as part of the process.” The Colonel seemed very relaxed and casual as he spoke.**

**He continued, “So, set up an appointment to have him come in as soon as possible. It should be a standard write-up for the records. Let’s get him discharged and out of here. Easy enough.”**

**Colonel Blanks handed me the Dosek file, which was inside a manila folder. As much as I would like to, I could never claim a definite memory of exactly what the initial Dosek conversation with Colonel Blanks covered. I simply don’t remember exactly how the Colonel told me the details of the case, other than conveying the general impression that the case was a small potatoes affair. The case was nothing special in Blanks’ opinion, or at least that was the impression that he sought to convey throughout this matter.**

**With the file in hand, I walked a couple of dozen feet from the Colonel’s office to my own. I started paging through the file, and mumbled to myself, “The Colonel is right, at least according to the reports in the file, this is going to be a simple, straightforward case.”**

**According to the file, two Air Force men, Robert L. Dosek and Harold H. Buford, were arrested by the civilian police authorities in San Bernardino at Dosek’s home minutes after Dosek received a package in the mail containing heroin. The package was sent from Thailand directly to Dosek’s home. Buford was Dosek’s neighbor, and both men belonged to the same unit, the 63d Field Maintenance Squadron at Norton. This was the squadron that performed maintenance on the C-141’s, the transport planes that regularly flew between the United States and Asia.**

**The file clearly indicated that the two men were both allegedly guilty of possession. When the cops busted them a few minutes after the delivery of the package, the package had been opened, and Buford was getting high on the heroin. According to the file, Buford was smoking a portion of the heroin powder that was rolled up inside a cigarette. Apparently, there was no need to inject the heroin delivered in the package. The drug was at a level of purity that a user could get high by just smoking a few grains of the powder mixed into the tobacco of a cigarette.**

**I thought, “Boy, talk about getting caught red-handed. In 10 minutes, they had already torn into that package. Now that is enthusiasm, to put it mildly.”**

**Surprisingly, as things turned out, the two men professed their innocence, and all criminal charges against both men were dropped by the civilian authorities over the next few months following their arrests. However, the evidence of drug smuggling and use was strong enough to result in both Dosek and Buford being brought up by their commander for a quick discharge from the Air Force.**

**After reading the file, the first step in the process for me was to set up an interview date with Dosek. Colonel Blanks’ assignment to me was the preparation of the administrative action against Dosek that would result in his commander, Lt. Colonel Wayne A. Mann, ordering a less than honorable discharge from the Air Force.**

**When I entered the case, the decision had already been made to drop the civilian criminal prosecution of Dosek and Buford; I played no role in that process. In fact, one of my first unanswered questions about the Dosek case was simply: Why didn’t the civilian authorities prosecute Dosek and Buford? When I asked Colonel Blanks that question, he could not give me an answer. He said, “I don’t really know for sure. That decision was made by the civilians.”**

**Colonel Blanks took the position that the arrests took place, and Dosek was involved with heroin. For whatever reason he wasn’t being criminally prosecuted by the civilian authorities, but certainly he should be fired from the Air Force. The documents in the file were not easily readable, as was often the case in the 1970’s before high-quality copier machines.**

**Table

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**I went through the file page by page. These two had been busted without any flaws in the arrest; there was a valid search warrant. Everything seemed to be in good order. In fact, the further I read, I found myself wondering: Why didn’t the civilians prosecute at least Dosek for receiving narcotics smuggled into the country. Even Buford’s case was serious, although it was only possession. I read on.**

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**Dosek’s alibi was not one of complete innocence. He admitted that a person named Sergeant Robert L. Terrel had mailed Dosek heroin from Thailand. Dosek admitted that he had received the heroin, but Dosek claimed that the heroin was for his own personal use. The reports in Dosek’s file stated that he was a user of heroin. Plus, Colonel Blanks had told me that it seemed clear that Dosek was an addict, although Dosek denied ever using heroin while at Norton.**

**In a nutshell, his admissions were damning, but his story excluded a far, far more serious possibility. The possibility existed that Dosek’s package of heroin was not intended for his personal use; it was possible that the heroin Dosek received was intended for resale. The possibility of resale was raised if the quantity of heroin in the package was significant.**

**I raised the question to Colonel Blanks early on in my investigation, “How do we know that Dosek’s intent was not to sell the dope?” In other words, “Dosek might be a pusher, who at this point is trying to avoid heavyweight prosecution as a pusher by pretending to be a pitiful, hapless addict.”**

**If Dosek was a pusher that issue raised a hornet’s nest of concerns. For one thing, I asked my boss for an explanation why criminal charges against Dosek were not filed by the Air Force. It didn’t make sense. In 1975 at Norton air base, the commanders’ policy was to fully prosecute an airman if we found a single marijuana seed in their possession. The policy on Norton was to throw the book at any drug offender. It didn’t make sense that a truly serious offense— conspiracy to smuggle heroin into the United States— was not being prosecuted as the felony that it was.**

**Colonel Blanks would not, or could not, tell me why the criminal charges against Dosek were dropped by the civilian authorities. It might be that Blanks simply did not know. “The decision to not seek Dosek’s long-term incarceration was not made at my level of authority,” Colonel Blanks claimed, “I don’t know how Dosek’s escape from civilian criminal prosecution was accomplished.” Colonel Blanks also could not explain why the Air Force did not prosecute**

**However, I thought that the dropped charges were a major defense counsel victory for a guilty client. The questioning of my boss, unfortunately, did not lead to answers that satisfied my youthful curiosity.**

**Dosek’s answers during his interview also did nothing to satisfy my curiosity. In fact, speaking with Dosek only intensified a sense that something was very mysterious in the situation before me.**

**I interviewed Dosek at length – one on one, in my office. From the moment the man walked through my office door, I knew that I was not looking at what I had expected to see. I had expected to see a junkie. Or at least, see a person fitting my concept of a man who was a user of heroin. Nothing about Dosek’s appearance was that of a heroin user. In 1975, there probably weren’t a lot of circumstances under which an ordinary person would have opportunities to rub shoulders with real heroin users. As a New Yorker, I had that opportunity on many occasions. That experience made me aware of the characteristics of a heroin user. Users have certain characteristics, mannerisms, looks, and smell. Hard drug users show certain characteristics if you know what to look for. To come to the point, I sat with Dosek in that interview long enough to realize his alibi was a lie. My New York experience said to me that Dosek was no heroin user. Not even close to it.**

**“How long have you used heroin?” I asked him point blank.**

**“Ever since I was stationed over in Vietnam,” was Dosek’s response, “It’s what got me through the day.” He spoke of how hard things had been for him and how much he depends on the drug, but his words sounded less than genuine, as he sat tall in his chair. He was well groomed. I remembered what Irene had said years before about junkies having swollen hands. His hands and wrists were slim; they were not at all swollen. His file did not show a history of discipline or workplace problems.**

**The suspicion that Dosek’s pitiful addict story was a lie caused me to focus on the realization that the file was not entirely clear on what amount of heroin was in the package that was seized at the time of arrest, although at two points the amount was referred to as around 1.4 grams inside a letter.**

**I found out that the parcel of heroin that Dosek received in the mail was being kept in the evidence locker at the base’s Office of Special Investigations — the OSI. The OSI is the Air Force’s equivalent of the FBI. I went over to the OSI office, and I asked to see the heroin and the other evidence in the case.**

**The OSI agent with whom I spoke at the office did not want to let me see the heroin. “What do you want to see it for?” he said with a smile. When I asked to see the dope, I was facing him, but I turned to look around the office before the agent began speaking. The OSI agent claimed there was really nothing to see. “It’s all sealed up. You can’t really touch it or anything like that.”**

**“I don’t want to touch the heroin, but I would like to make a note in the file that I examined the contraband and comment on what I observed,” I replied.**

**I casually looked around the office, so he was behind me when I made it clear that I wanted to see the heroin. He was behind me, but I could clearly see his face’s reflection in a cabinet’s glass cover. “Sure, I’ll get it for you,” his voice was friendly and cheerful. But his reflection in the glass showed a hateful expression, a grimace that belied the tone of his pleasant-sounding voice. He was putting on a facade of cooperation, but I could see the expression on his face. He was very angry at me, although he was doing a masterful job of masking that sentiment in his voice. He did not realize that I could see a reflection of his face.**

**That was strange. I was the government’s attorney working on the case; there should be no problem with me getting access to the evidence.**

**I do not remember the weight of the seized heroin, although I later entered the weight into my day notes. As I held the parcel, it felt like more than a pound. The file stated that the weight was 1.4 grams. I wondered if the reports in the file had meant 1.4 pounds. I asked the agent about the weight, and he told me a figure that seemed to be less than the weight that I held.**

**The worst thing, however, was that the agent tried to mislead me regarding the purity of the dope. I asked him whether the heroin had been tested for purity. The agent answered, “It’s not very potent. It’s only Number 4 heroin. It’s not the really strong stuff. It’s only Number 4.”**

**A siren went off in my head. The OSI agent was trying to tell me that Number 4 heroin was not the “strong stuff”. I remembered what I had read in McCoy’s book two years earlier: Number 4 heroin is the most potent drug on the planet. I recoiled inside with trepidation. With a huge amount of wisdom, I showed no reaction upon realizing the OSI agent was intentionally misleading me about the potency of the seized drug. Either he was misleading me, or he was ignorant concerning drugs. Instead, I quietly contemplated the implications of his deceit. It was only a handful of days into my investigation of the Dosek matter, and my visit to the OSI evidence room had become a key factor in triggering my suspicion that heroin smuggling was being accomplished through Norton air base.**

**I worked out the arithmetic on the amount of Number 4 received, cut down to the potency of street sale. My conclusion was stunning. Dosek had received in the mail from Thailand enough heroin to produce 3,000 doses of the drug once it was diluted to street level potency.**

**I approached Colonel Blanks with my findings and questions regarding Dosek’s claim of personal use. I told Colonel Blanks that I doubted Dosek’s assertion that he was a heroin user. Plus, I made clear that the amount of heroin seized was enough to produce 3,000 doses of the drug. Despite my efforts to show that Dosek’s claims were probably fallacious, Colonel Blanks insisted that I prepare a report stating personal use. I was told not to worry about the negative implications raised by the quantity and potency of the dope that was seized.**

**In my report, I followed Blanks’ orders and stated that the heroin appeared to be for personal use, but I added that “Dosek was certainly well supplied.” When Colonel Blanks read that language in my report, he laughed nervously. “That is an interesting way of framing your conclusion,” Blanks said. He smiled and seemed relieved that I had signed off on the theory of personal use.**

**Soon after my report was entered into the file, the base legal office received a phone call from Sergeant Harold Buford, the neighbor who was arrested along with Dosek. Buford requested that I represent him in his effort to avoid discharge from the Air Force. Buford said during our first telephone call, “I heard that you are my only hope of staying in the Air Force. I heard that you’re the best Air Force attorney west of the Mississippi.” He told me that he desperately needed my help.**

**Colonel Blanks approved me representing Buford in the discharge action, which was referred to in Air Force jargon as a Discharge under AFM 39-12, Chapter 2, Section B.**

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**Soon after Buford arrived in my office for our initial consultation, he began sobbing. Crying almost uncontrollably as he tried to explain his story. “I was in the wrong place at the wrong time,” he said, “I done nothing wrong.” He professed his innocence regarding any use or possession of heroin or any other drug on July 11, 1975, the date of his arrest.**

**Essentially, Buford claimed that the arresting officers were lying. The police reports stated that when the arresting officers busted into Dosek’s home at the start of the drug raid, Buford was smoking a cigarette laced with heroin that he attempted to sneakily throw out a bathroom window. The report said that an officer saw Buford’s hand throwing something out the bathroom window, and another officer found the heroin-laced cigarette on the ground outside the window. Neither officer said he actually saw the cigarette in Buford’s hand.**

**I never really believed Buford’s claim that he was not smoking heroin at the time of his arrest with Dosek. And, in fact, several weeks later Buford failed a lie detector test, with flying colors, on the specific question regarding whether he was caught smoking a heroin-laced cigarette that he attempted to throw out a bathroom window through a small hole in the window’s screen. Two policemen at the scene both reported that Buford was at the window with his fingers at the hole, but neither officer asserted that he had seen Buford holding a cigarette. Buford claimed the police were lying. My intuition said to me that a lying cop would have added that he saw the cigarette in Buford’s hand. My reasoning was simple. If a cop is going to lie, he will tell a lie that completes the picture of guilt. A lying cop would say that he saw the drug-laced cigarette in Buford’s hand. Therefore, my conclusion was the police were not lying about Buford’s heroin use that morning. Buford was lying about that. Buford claimed he was framed, but the lie detector test said on that issue Buford was telling a lie.**

**The OSI agent who conducted the polygraph examination seemed theatrical in his effort to convince me that Buford was a congenital liar. “Don’t believe anything he says. Nothing Buford says is true,” the examiner repeated multiple times, while waving his arms for emphasis. I felt like telling the polygraph examiner to calm down. This was not my first time with a client who was lying about something connected to his case. Logic had already informed me that Buford was lying about the heroin laced cigarette, but that did not mean that every word out of his mouth was a lie.**

**Buford had previously been a heroin addict while stationed in Thailand. He had gone through an Air Force rehabilitation program that was aimed to help recovering addicts get back on their feet while retaining their job in the Air Force. Buford and I met on several occasions as I worked to prepare the defense at his upcoming discharge hearing. I felt sympathetic to his position; he wanted to stay on active duty, and I was trying to help my client reach the outcome he wanted.**

**It was during an afternoon meeting when I raised the question of the heroin’s purity. It was then that Buford said, “We’re both dead men. They will kill us both before they let this come to public light.” Harold Buford said he was aware that Norton was regularly used for large-scale trafficking of heroin. According to Buford, about once a week, as certain C-141’s were serviced after a return flight to the United States from Asia, members of his squadron would pull duffel bags full of dope from secure compartments on the airplanes. These duffel bags were taken from areas that would not normally be accessed. These areas were not intended to carry cargo.**

**“What are you saying,” I responded, although I was not in disbelief.**

**Before this conversation with Buford, I was already suspicious of the people involved in this case. The OSI agent had tried to mislead me about the potency of the seized heroin. Blanks was resistant to any suggestion that the amount of heroin was inconsistent with the personal use theory. Buford’s commander was ardently opposed to criminal prosecution, even though the man had a reputation as a strict enforcer of the criminal code in other drug cases. Even the OSI agent who conducted the polygraph examination seemed hyperbolic in his effort to discredit Buford**

**“I’ve seen them many times,” Buford was speaking slowly, his voice was filled with hesitation, “about once a week. During the night shift when there aren’t many people around.” He had my full attention.**

**“They take heavy duffel bags out of compartments on the C-141’s. These compartments are not areas where you would ever transport cargo. These were places like where hydraulics or electrical systems are found on the plane. Usually, these areas are locked shut and are only opened for scheduled maintenance. They are seldomly opened and never just opened willy-nilly for no reason.” Buford stopped speaking and looked at me; he was probably hesitant to continue.**

**“Go on,” I said, “have you seen what’s in these duffel bags?” Buford shook his head in the negative. “How big are the bags?”**

**“They’re the large size bags. From the way they carry them, I bet the bags weigh about 50 pounds.”**

**“Did you ever see Dosek handling one of these duffel bags,” I questioned. “Naw,” was his response, “but he was in tight with those guys doing it. He knew what was going on. He talked about the bags of heroin. He talked about how he could get some stuff from Thailand.”**

**“Mark my words,” said Buford, “it was just a matter of time, probably, a very short time that the men behind the real heavy-duty trafficking at Norton would kill us both if it looked like they might be exposed.”**

**Buford told me that he was willing to testify about drug smuggling at Norton. He said, “Busting them would be the only way to stop them. But I’m not sure they can be busted. They’re too connected. They’ll get off.”**

**I asked Buford to think over his willingness to testify. I was unsure how to proceed with the allegations he was making, and the final decision on his discharge was due soon.**

**Both Buford and Dosek were discharged from the Air Force, and the order was given that they should receive a less than honorable discharge. However, on the day that their discharges were issued, Colonel Blanks told me “There was a clerical mix-up and both men were issued honorable discharges.” The discharges were issued in January 1976. Both men immediately left the area. Years would pass by before I spoke with Buford again.**

**I was stunned when I learned that Dosek had received an honorable discharge. Here was a man who conspired to smuggle heroin into the country. He had avoided criminal prosecution by the civilian authorities. He then avoided criminal prosecution by the Air Force. And then he received an honorable discharge from the Air Force. The only penalty for his misconduct was the loss of his job, but with no taint of dishonor. This whole affair felt like a fixed prosecution with respect to Dosek, and I suspected that Buford’s honorable discharge was just tossed in to make the clerical error seem more believable.**

**I really don’t remember the extent to which I discussed the Dosek case with Linda. I would seldom tell her the details of my work, but I know that on more than one occasion I told her that I was suspicious of the Dosek case. I suspected that it was a fixed prosecution, and if Dosek’s treatment was designed to let him walk free, then what Buford had told me about heroin smuggling at Norton was probably true.**

**By January 1976 Linda and I were arguing regularly about almost everything. In mid-January we decided to spend some days apart. She went to San Francisco to see friends; I went east to the Bahamas and Florida. We packed our bags and left home at the same time. I remember distinctly that the last thing I did, before turning out the upstairs lights in our apartment, was turn off the record player in the bedroom. The record player was playing a record; music was flowing. I switched its dial to the off position, and I watched the machine as it cycled into shutdown.**

**There was another reason why I was happy to leave California in January 1976. For several weeks I had been tormented by hay fever. Never had I suffered from allergies before, and the doctors at the Norton clinic prescribed Sudafed to give me relief from my congestion and related ailments. But the discomforts worsened. I did not know in 1976 that a large part of the sickness I was feeling was caused by the medicine I was taking. The medicine –Sudafed – was pseudoephedrine, which is a sympathomimetic amine. I did not discover until 1994 that I am acutely allergic to sympathomimetic amines. When I left California, I stopped taking the medicine and my symptoms quickly subsided. However, at the time I reasoned that my allergy problems lessened because I was away from the California vegetation and smog that was troubling me.**

**First, I went to the Bahamas for a day. I walked the beach and tried to drown my problems with Linda in the Caribbean sun. That worked well, but sunset came, and a feeling of loneliness drove me back to the United States. I knew that my parents were going to be full of questions when I arrived in Miami without my wife, but that was the price of a free bed on the East Coast. It was Super Bowl weekend, January 18, 1976, and the big game was being played in Miami. The Miami airport was packed that Sunday morning. The “Where is Linda?” questions were immediate. Mother and Father listened to my answer, and it was obvious that they were upset to hear about our marital problems.**

**The Steelers victory over the Cowboys that Sunday provided some distraction. It seemed like the whole city was focused on football. After the game was over, many of my parent’s neighbors filled the street and a spontaneous touch football game erupted with players of all ages – from preteens to adults. My spirits were uplifted by the moment. I even caught a pass thrown by one of my parent’s neighbors. It seemed like everyone playing was an overjoyed Steelers fan. Many chanted “21 to 17” over and over, as excited high fives were slapped.**

**Linda and I were away from California for three or four days. While I was away from California in Miami, I called Gayle Pollard, my friend from the University of Michigan. At that time, she was a reporter with the Miami Herald newspaper. I explained to Gayle, “I think there might be a very volatile news story.” I described what I had observed at Norton. She listened attentively and said, “That type of story is not my beat, but I know someone who would be interested in hearing this. I’ll put you in touch.” My response was, “Good, do that.” But two days later I got back to Gayle and said, “Don’t go forward with your referral. I wonder if I have enough evidence of wrongdoing at this point. Hold off for the time being.”**

**My flight back to California that evening seemed longer than usual, and I welcomed the feel of touchdown at the Ontario airport near my home. Although the airport parking lot was not very large, it took me a few minutes to find my car, because I had lost the slip of paper on which I had written the parking space number a few days earlier. I slid the key into the Volkswagen’s ignition and the car fired right up. It always did; the VW bug had always been a very reliable car. That was an especially good thing on a night like that night when my sole focus was on getting back home. I was exhausted and emotionally drained from my vacation. Some vacation. When you have problems at home, you pack your problems in your suitcase and just take them with you to the Caribbean or wherever you go.**

**Mercifully, the drive home promised to be a short one. There was seldom traffic in small cities located halfway out in the desert in Southern California. Thankfully, I was heading home to Riverside without the huge difficulties that plague travelers leaving some big city airports like Atlanta, Los Angeles, or New York City.**

**The night was going to be cold, very much unlike the recent balmy temperatures of Miami and Nassau. The sky was filled with stars, although tonight I wasn’t paying them any attention. As is frequently the case in California in January, even though the day may be warm and spring-like, when the sun goes down it is going to get cold. Not as cold as Michigan or New York, but it will get into the 40’s, even though the daytime temperature may have been in the 70’s.**

**When I opened the door to our apartment, I was almost immediately struck by the heavy silence at the entry way to the living room. All the lights were out, and there was a feel of gloominess in the air. There was an unfamiliar scent, perhaps the result of the apartment being sealed shut for the days we were away. Linda was still in San Francisco. I knew that before I got home from the fact that the VW was still parked at the airport, so the fact she was not at the apartment was no surprise. I don’t think that I had ever been in the apartment alone before, at least not at night.**

**I carried my suitcase up to our bedroom on the second floor and clicked on the lights. There seems to be two types of people in the world. One type feels the urge to unpack immediately upon returning home from a trip; the other type would rather put unpacking off for as long as possible. I’m the first type, so I began unpacking. Traveling light has never been my forte, so I had a full suitcase that was heavy with clothes, many of which were not even worn on my so-called vacation.**

**“So, what if many things were actually clean; everything is wrinkled,” I thought. Everything was headed to the dirty clothes hamper; that was the easiest and quickest way to unpack and get on to the here and now.**

**I put the suitcase on the bed and fumbled with its contents for a few brief moments as I pondered what was going to happen with us — Linda and me. The arguments were becoming nonstop, and, by this point, it had become clear to me that the stranger I had married was not compatible. I shook my head, “That’s what happens when you marry a woman you’ve known for four months. Plus, almost half that time I was on the other side of the country.”**

**“This place needs some sound,” I thought, as I walked over to the bedroom’s record player and clicked its switch to turn the machine on. Then I went into the bathroom to return my shaving equipment and left-over toiletries to their regular home. I looked at myself in the mirror; I did a lousy job of shaving that morning and thought that maybe I would shave again right now and pay some attention to my moustache, since it was growing too long to pass Air Force regulations. I looked at my reflection in the mirror for a while, as I reminisced on how easy all that was with the hair and the moustache in civilian life at Dewey, Ballantine. Two or three minutes had passed since I fired up the record player, but no music was playing. The realization that the apartment was still silent crept into my consciousness as I washed my hands after flushing the toilet.**

**I walked over to the record player and stood over the box, staring down. I could clearly hear a distinct squeaking sound coming from the machine. But there was no music coming from the speakers. The record player sat on the floor in the corner of the bedroom. It was dark in that corner, so I had to get down on my hands and knees to take a close look at the turntable. I could see that the record was spinning on the turntable and the needle arm was on the record; that’s what was causing the squeaking sound – the needle was contacting the vinyl of the disc.**

**I inspected the machine more closely, and what I discovered next immediately caused me to react in disbelief. The reason why no music was playing was because both speakers had been disconnected from the turntable. One speaker’s cable was near the speaker, but clearly unplugged; the other speaker’s connecting cable was a foot away from the connector hole at the back of the speaker. I clicked the off switch and watched the stylus as it moved through the shutdown sequence and turned itself off. This did not make sense. My recollection was very clear. When we left the apartment one of the last things I did was turn off the record player and at that point the music was playing loud and clear.**

**I unplugged the record player from the wall socket. As I bent my body to stand up, I grasped the record player with both hands and pulled it up with me. I carried the turntable over to the dresser and placed it on the strong wooden surface of the dresser. It was a lot brighter in that part of the room, so I could take a good look. Maybe I could see what’s going on. I had no idea what I expected to see, but everything looked normal with the record player. I looked back at the corner where the record player sat on the floor, unmoved for many months. One could clearly see the indentations in the carpet where the record player had made its home.**

**“What the hell has happened here?” I thought, while standing next to the dresser for a few moments. “Someone has been in here and disconnected the speakers. Those cables didn’t disconnect themselves. Someone has been in here.” I stood motionless for a few seconds thinking about what I had discovered. There has been a burglary here. I needed to check the rest of the apartment. “Whoa,” a pang of anxiety shot through me. “Am I alone in here right now?” I had not checked the closet in the living room or looked inside the downstairs bathroom or the kitchen when I came into the apartment; the thought had not crossed my mind to do that. There could be someone in my apartment right now and I would not even have been aware of it. I had not checked to see whether the stereo system in the living room was still there.**

**I left the bedroom and checked the other bedroom on the second floor; there was nothing unusual. I walked down the stairs to the first floor. Right away, I could see that the stereo system was in its usual place in the wall unit. That was a relief, because the stereo system in our living room was the most valuable asset in our apartment. I needed to check the downstairs bathroom, the closet on the first floor and the kitchen. I walked into the kitchen; nothing was unusual in there. The doors to both the closet and the downstairs bathroom were closed. Without thinking, my right hand closed into a fist as I opened the door to the bathroom with my left hand. No one was inside. Now for the closet on the other side of the living room, the one underneath the staircase. It was big enough for a grown man to stand just beyond the door. As I reached for the doorknob with my left hand, again my right hand clinched into a fist as I turned the doorknob and pushed the door open. There was a squeak and then a bump as something on the other side of the door fell to the floor just inside the closet. There was enough light to see that no one was inside.**

**I walked around the apartment, looking closely at all the windows. I had never really paid attention to the fact that there weren’t a lot of windows in our apartment even though the apartment itself was quite large. Plus, there were only two doors— the front door and the sliding door to the balcony. The sliding door and all the windows were securely locked. There were no gouge marks or scrapings that would indicate a forced entry. I was certain I would have noticed if the front door was unlocked when I used my key to enter the apartment 20 minutes earlier that evening. Of course, I really didn’t pay much attention, but I was quite positive the sequence of sliding the key into the keyhole and turning the mechanism was the same as always.**

**Nevertheless, I decided to test the door. I unlocked the door, then went outside and shut the door to see whether there was any difference in sequence if I attempted to unlock an already unlocked door. The sequence was entirely different. When I turned the key attempting to unlock the door, the sequence was smooth and uninterrupted. The feel of the key turning was very much unlike the clicking feel of unlocking a locked door. There was no question in my mind, the entry door to the apartment was in fact locked when I arrived that evening. Plus, the balcony door was securely locked, and the kitchen window was securely locked. The two upstairs windows were also closed and locked. Nothing in the apartment was missing and nothing looked out of place. The speaker cables on the downstairs stereo were all connected. The only anomaly was the record player in the bedroom, and it had certainly been tampered with by someone.**

**I went into the kitchen and sat down at the table. If I were not so hungry, I probably would not have bothered to eat anything, but I was starving. I made two peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, which began to kill the hunger throbs in my stomach. I sat at the kitchen table chewing the crunchy peanuts and savored the sweet moistness of the jelly. That’s when it fully registered as I was chewing. The answer to my question “What was that all about? Someone was here. They took nothing and left without a trace of how they entered and then exited a locked home. Why?”**

**At first, I did not want to accept the reality of what this very clearly meant. Obviously, someone had been inside our apartment during the time we were gone. Someone had chosen to disconnect the speakers on the bedroom record player, and apparently do nothing else. An answer struck me. Maybe the reason why they did not take anything is because they never intended to take anything. My mind had turned to the Dosek case. Perhaps the reason why they came was to leave something behind, some sort of eavesdropping device.**

**If I had been more experienced, perhaps I would have opened the turntable and the speakers. In 1976 the thought of opening the turntable or the speakers was a fleeting one, because I would not have known what to look for. I had no idea what a bug even looked like. I could figure it would be something electronic, but everything inside the turntable was something electronic. The most important thing was I really had no one to turn to for help with this situation. “Whom am I going to ask – the OSI?” Agents at the OSI were on my list of suspects. Or I could go to the Riverside police – the local police. That was a fleeting thought, when I mulled what had happened to the civilian prosecution of Dosek.**

**One thing that I figured I could do was take the turntable and the speakers and put them into the storage unit down in the garage. So that’s what I did. I carried the turntable, along with the two speakers, down to the garage. Each apartment had a storage cabinet, which was large by California standards, that was located on the wall next to the unit’s assigned parking space. I opened our storage unit and was happy to see there was enough room for the record player and speakers. I shut the door to the storage cabinet, thinking “At least this way no one can listen to our conversations.”**

**“Bugged?” I thought, “The Dosek people would be the only people who would have enough interest in me to bug my house. No one else involved in my life would have knowledge of how to do it. Almost 20 years would pass before I had the opportunity to question a true expert in the field of electronic surveillance concerning the incident with the record player. That person was Dan – one of Hal Lipset’s surveillance technicians.** [**Here is an article from the San Francisco Chronicle concerning Hal Lipset and his team of experts.**](https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Dean-of-Detectives-Dies-in-S-F-Harold-Lipset-2790890.php)

**“Walter, your instinct was correct, in most likelihood,” was the surveillance technician’s immediate response upon hearing my story. “Back in the 1970’s, there was a technique known as “third wiring a stereo system”. In 1976, I had never heard of third wiring, but the concept was quite simple. The sound system’s speaker was good for not only projecting sound, but also for collecting sound. Inside every speaker is a circular diaphragm that can act like a microphone. Through a process called “third wiring” the speaker’s potential to collect sound as a microphone is triggered. A transmitter is hidden inside the record player, and the transmitter operates on the electrical current coming into the record player from its wall socket. The transmitter sends the collected conversations to a receiver located somewhere nearby. The receiver might be in a car parked inconspicuously on the street; there would not need to be any constant human oversight in the parked vehicle.**

**“In most likelihood your bedroom was bugged, and whoever was listening to you might have been listening for quite some time.” Dan was very enlightening, “Keep in mind here, Walter, the entry that you discovered might have been the entry where the bugging materials were removed from your house. You apparently were under the impression at that time that the entry you discovered was the initiation of the bugging. It might have been. But it might very well have been the removal of the bug when the bad guys messed up and failed to reconnect the stereo speakers to the turntable.”**

**Back in 1976, a new thought struck me after I returned to the apartment from the storage unit. I assumed initially there was only one bug, but there could be more than one bug; there could be bugs downstairs, and there could be more bugs in the bedroom. “For all I know, my car could be bugged,” I thought. But moments later, there was a second thought: I had never in my life heard of a car being bugged. I had never heard of a case where the bad guys bugged law enforcement. However, many years later, I read that the drug cartels in South America made a practice of bugging the law enforcement agencies in Colombia back in the 1970’s and 1980’s when Colombia was the center of the cocaine trade.**

**I needed to tell Linda about this discovery because we needed to never speak about the Dosek situation again. I had told her that I had suspicions about several people who were involved with Dosek’s case and the way it was rushed to discharge. I remembered one conversation had taken place in the bedroom, just a few days before we left on our separate vacations.**

**It was bedtime, so I went to bed, although I tossed and turned through much of the night. I was aware of any sound outdoors; mercifully, indoors was quiet all night.**

**The next morning, I went back down to the garage. Nothing had changed with the storage unit. As I walked from the garage I saw the apartment complex manager on the other side of the street, about to cross the street heading towards my building. I quickly tried to compose a question that would essentially ask: “Did you happen to see anybody trying to break into my apartment?” However, I did not want to be so direct, because I did not want to go into the back story. I really did not want to go into the back story of why I thought someone might try to break into my apartment. I really did not want to say that I felt my apartment had been bugged. I didn’t want to explain why I did not want to just call the police. Within a few seconds, Mary was greeting me.**

**“Hi, Walter. How are you today?” Mary was always very pleasant to everyone, but I realized that I didn’t really know her. I had no basis to feel that I could confide in her, so I did not want to go into the back story involving a heroin cartel.**

**“I’m doing great,” I answered, “and you?” The apartment manager smiled as she spoke, “There’s nothing new under the sun. I’m just making my rounds.”**

**“You know, Mary, we haven’t had any problems here with break-ins, have we? No burglaries or anything like that, right?” I asked with obvious hesitation in my voice.**

**“No, of course not. This is a very safe neighborhood. Why do you ask, has there been some sort of problem?” Her facial expression changed to one of genuine concern as she continued, “Riverside, especially here in the Canyon Crest area, has always been a very crime free neighborhood.”**

**“That’s great to hear, but, you know, I’ve been thinking about getting some renters insurance. It couldn’t hurt. In the long run you never know. There could be a fire or break-in. You never know. Renters insurance doesn’t cost that much; it’s probably a good investment.” Mary nodded as she waved to one of the workmen who called to her from the clubhouse next to the swimming pool.**

**“Sure, some of the residents have insurance. In the long run it’s like an investment,” she said as she turned towards the clubhouse. “How’s Linda, I don’t think I’ve seen her in a while?” I answered that Linda had been out of town, without saying that I had also been out of town in the complete opposite direction. I knew that I did not want to explain to Mary why that was in fact the case. Our marital situation was becoming an embarrassment.**

**It had occurred to me when we first moved into the apartment that the kitchen window was right at a level where a person could climb into the apartment through the kitchen window without even using a ladder; the window was no higher than 4 feet above the exterior hallway floor. For that reason, I had placed a solid piece of wood in the window frame that prevented the horizontal sliding window from being opened any wider than a few inches. That way, the window could be opened from time to time, to allow a balmy breeze. However, the wooden shaft would not allow the window to be opened wide enough for a person to enter the apartment.**

**As it turned out, we never opened the window in the kitchen for a breeze, because although the hallway was outdoors there was very little wind, since the apartment building on its backside was at the bottom of a steep hill. There was never any wind coming from that direction. I also had taken a second step that was designed to detect any attempt at forced entry through the window. I had taken a small piece of scotch tape and taped it at the juncture of the window and frame. My idea was if anyone ever tried to open the window the tape would wrinkle and leave a telltale sign of attempted entry. The tape was still smooth and tight. Whoever entered our apartment did not try to enter through the kitchen window**

**I sat down on the couch in the living room, but then moved to a chair as my back registered a moment of pain. “Maybe, if someone did this in the middle of the day when no one was around, then no one would have seen,” I thought slowly. That would not add up, unless the burglar came on Friday, during the work week. But even on a Friday during the workday, the chances of being seen were significant. On Saturday or Sunday, the chances were even higher.**

**Of course, I did not have the benefit in 1976 of an expert’s assessment of the situation in which I found myself. Common sense told me that if there was some sort of listening device it was probably in the record player or the speakers. Otherwise, why would the bad guy have bothered to even touch the cheap record player in the bedroom. I sat at the kitchen table eating the makeshift meal I had prepared for myself. I did realize one bit of insight: the corner where the record player was located was a very dark area of the room, and, to work with the record player and the speakers, the person almost undoubtedly picked the items up and moved them to a brighter lit part of the room. He probably took the turntable and placed it on top of the dresser, since there the lighting was much better. That position would have been much more like having the turntable on a workbench; a perfect height to work with the turntable or the speakers.**

**By the time I was airborne leaving Miami, I had decided to put the Dosek matter on a back shelf, unless there was some new development. This seemed to be that new and foreboding development. Never in my life had I heard of criminals bugging law enforcement. The Mafia doesn’t bug the FBI.**

**Later that morning, I pressed the start button on the living room’s stereo system, and at first there was no sound. It hit me after a second or two that I needed to either click to the radio function or press an additional button for the record on the turntable to begin spinning. I clicked on the radio and the room was filled with music; after a few seconds the music dissolved into a commercial. No unplugged speakers here. I was absorbed with my thoughts, so I jumped when the telephone rang. The ring startled me and forced me to confront the fact that I was tense, maybe even a little frightened. The phone rang several more times before I was able to pick up the receiver and answer, “Hello, this is Walter.”**

**“Hi honey,” it was Linda. She was wearing her pretty voice, and that meant she did not want to continue the argument that had raged several days ago. Good, neither did I.**

**“My flight arrives at eight this evening. You can pick me up, right?” I told her I was happy to hear her voice and that I would be there. “Let me write down the details, the flight number.” The phone call was a short one, because she was calling from a pay phone and only had a few quarters in change.**

**I left home for the airport that evening early enough to arrive on time for Linda’s flight. I wasn’t really looking forward to seeing Linda, and now the situation was even more complicated. Our personal life situation was bad enough, but now I had to do something about the fact that drug smugglers were apparently aware that I suspected their conspiracy was flourishing at Norton. One of the things that I needed to do was tell Linda about the break-in. On the other hand, I debated with myself, “Why tell her? If she doesn’t know, what difference will it make?”**

**Linda’s flight was on time. Ontario airport was a throwback to the 1950’s. When passengers exited the aircraft, you had to walk across the tarmac to the terminal. There was no such thing as those entry ramps that connected directly to the aircraft and allowed the passengers to walk immediately inside the terminal. I saw Linda coming from a distance, and she was smiling. She looked pretty; she always looked pretty to me. We hugged and we both said we missed each other.**

**With her luggage on the back seat of the Volkswagen, I drove out of the airport. She was chattering on about how she had missed me, but she had tried to have a good time with her friends in San Francisco. I was listening, but I realized if I was going to tell her I needed to tell her before we got home. I waited a few minutes before I told her the news. “Linda, there’s something I need to tell you about. I think our apartment has been bugged by the people who I suspect are smuggling heroin through Norton.”**

**Linda exclaimed “What? Why do you think that?” I explained about the record player. Linda was staring at me in disbelief, “Maybe, maybe someone was about to steal it,” she stammered.**

**“I thought about that. Think about it, if someone wanted to steal a record player, wouldn’t they steal the one downstairs? It’s worth 10 times as much as the record player in the bedroom.” I went on to explain that I couldn’t find any signs of forced entry plus the apartment appeared to be totally locked. I couldn’t see how they got in and I couldn’t see how they got out. I told her that I had taken the record player and put it in the storage closet in the garage.**

**“Let me tell you. When I got home it looked like nothing in the apartment had been touched in any way but the stereo speakers for the upstairs turntable were disconnected. They were both disconnected from the turntable. You remember when we left the apartment one of the last things I did after we took the luggage down from the bedroom was turn off the record player. It was blasting music. But when I got back home the speakers had been disconnected from the turntable. Somebody had been in our apartment and as far as I can see they stole nothing. The only change I can see is they disconnected the stereo speakers.”**

**For a few minutes, Linda didn’t say anything, then she stammered “I’m afraid. I’m afraid to go home. Heroin smugglers? Listening to us because you know about them? You’ve got to go to the police. I don’t want to go home.” In retrospect, I wish that I had gone to the civilian authorities. The Riverside Police Department would have jurisdiction over what appeared to have been a burglary at our apartment in Riverside. If I had taken the record player to the police and asked them to examine it, they might have found the bug. However, at the time that thought did not seem to be a good option.**

**Over the course of the night, I decided to report my suspicions to the Air Force inspector general. One positive thing about my decision to report the heroin smuggling activity at Norton to the Air Force inspector general was the fact that the inspector general headquarters was located at Norton, only a few hundred yards away from the legal office. There was no need to travel or call Washington. The Air Force Inspection and Safety Center was the inspector general’s formal title. This was the Air Force agency charged with making independent assessments of Air Force operations. In January 1976, Lieutenant General Donald G. Nunn was the Inspector General of the Air Force. I never met or spoke to General Nunn. I decided to make my report to one of General Nunn’s staff, a man named Brigadier General Thomas E. Clifford.**

**The headquarters building had virtually no windows, as was the case with several large office buildings at Norton. The hallways were somewhat dark and claustrophobic; but at least it was cool inside. As I walked down the corridor towards General Clifford’s office, I began having second thoughts about what I was about to do. Perhaps I should have rehearsed the presentation I was going to give him. Maybe I should just keep my mouth shut. Too late,” I thought, “I’m already here.” I was resigned to doing what I had set out to do. My memory fails me as to whether General Clifford had a secretary or if the inspector general’s suite of offices had some sort of receptionist, but I’m sure that I put on my best display of Air Force decorum as I walked into the general’s office.**

**I chose to make my disclosure to General Clifford because he was an African American. That choice turned out to be a huge mistake. Probably, this was a life-changing mistake.**

**On that morning in January 1976, I did not know about the Lucas arrest on America’s East coast, but it is difficult to grasp how the Air Force Inspector General was not aware of the Lucas prosecution and its allegation that military transport aircraft were being used by the Lucas cartel to smuggle heroin into the country. What I had uncovered at Norton might have been the remnants of Lucas’s supply chain, or it might have been a copycat operation. Another possibility was that another syndicate was using military resources and operating completely without knowledge of what Lucas was doing. With those very real possibilities in mind, it is difficult to understand how General Clifford in January 1976 could flatly declare the leads developed by my investigation were not worth pursuing. But that is exactly what he told me.**

**Although I had never met General Clifford, I knew quite a lot about him. He had been in the newspapers because he was one of the highest-ranking Blacks in the Air Force at the time of his assignment to the Inspector General. He arrived at Norton around the same time as I, but General Clifford had led a long and prestigious career in the Air Force. As a fighter pilot, General Clifford flew dozens of combat missions in Vietnam. He was born in Washington, DC and had attended Howard University, where he was a cadet in the Air Force ROTC program. Several people who had met him had remarked to me over the months that he seemed to be an excellent officer and role model.**

**“General Clifford, my name is Captain Walter Lewis. I’m an assistant staff judge advocate with the base legal office here at Norton,” I said crisply as I stood at attention in front of his desk. I snapped a salute and held my hand aloft until he returned the salute in kind.**

**“General Clifford, I’ll come right to the point. Over the last several weeks, I have encountered information which leads me to believe that there is large-scale heroin smuggling going on through Norton.” General Clifford stared at me with a look of disbelief on his face. To the best of my recollection, he did not say a word in response, even though I waited several seconds to give him a chance to process what I said.**

**“Sir, three months ago I was assigned a case involving a man by the name of Sergeant Robert Dosek. Dosek and another sergeant named Harold Buford were arrested in July by the San Bernardino police when Dosek received a package at his off-base home containing pure heroin. The heroin had been mailed to him from Thailand.” Clifford said nothing in response. I continued, “Sir, as far as I could see, the arrest followed a valid search. There were no legal improprieties, but for some reason the civilian authorities decided to not prosecute Dosek or Buford. Instead, the civilians remanded the two men to the Air Force for discipline. Someone in our chain of command reached the decision to not prosecute these two men. The decision was reached to administratively discharge the two with less than honorable discharges. A week ago, the two men were discharged, but instead of receiving a general discharge, both men were given honorable discharges, and they have apparently left the area.”**

**I recited to General Clifford the actions of Colonels Blanks and Mann that I thought to be suspicious. I added my suspicions regarding the OSI agent who administered a polygraph exam to Buford.**

**“There is more. Buford has confided in me that he wishes to divulge information that he has concerning what he has described to me as ongoing trafficking in heroin here at Norton. Buford has told me that frequently he has seen maintenance men removing duffel bag sized parcels of heroin that have been hidden in compartments on Norton’s C-141’s that have returned from Asia.”**

**“Plus, one of the agents at the base OSI tried to mislead me regarding the potency of the heroin seized at Dosek’s residence. The seized heroin is what is known as Number Four heroin. Plus, the amount of heroin seized appears to be conflicted in the reports.” I had listed five people, including Dosek, as suspects in a conspiracy that probably included additional actors in the maintenance squadron. I paused, thinking that Clifford was about to respond, but after a few seconds of silence, I continued.**

**“General Clifford, you may not be aware, Number 4 heroin is the most potent heroin on the planet. But the OSI agent told me that Number 4 heroin was lousy, weak heroin. Lousy in the sense that it was not a very potent form of the drug. Number 4 heroin is usually only in the hands of very high-level drug smuggling organizations. They take Number 4 heroin and dilute it with common substances like milk powder before making sales at the street level. What the OSI agent tried to do was extremely misleading, and it also tended to buttress the idea that the amount of heroin Dosek had received was insubstantial, when in fact the amount was huge when diluted to street level.” I told General Clifford the OSI agent’s name.**

**“So, you’re dumb enough and fool enough to take the word of a heroin user?” said Clifford calmly as he finally broke his silence. For a moment I did not respond. At least now I had some indication of what Clifford was thinking underneath his poker-faced exterior. He didn’t believe what I was telling him, and apparently, he intended to insult me.**

**“Sir, I strained to maintain my composure, “Oftentimes informants in drug cases have a history of drug use. Oftentimes these are the sort of people who can observe suspicious activity because the criminals trust them. And, because of his familiarity with heroin,” I began a new sentence, but General Clifford cut me off in midsentence. The general blurted out: “This man Buford was arrested with Dosek?” I replied in the affirmative. General Clifford continued, “This man Buford, he’s a heroin user?”**

**I replied, “Buford denied using heroin at the time of his arrest, but his Air Force record reflects that he has been a heroin user in the past and he failed a lie detector test recently concerning his claim of nonuse on the date of his arrest at Dosek’s home.”**

**General Clifford’s face was blank of all emotion. It was obvious that he was listening to me, but he showed no sign of what he was thinking as I spoke.**

**I continued, “Sir, during my investigation prior to rendering my discharge report, I discovered that the amount of heroin Dosek received in the mail was substantially more than an amount that could logically be called for one’s own personal use. Dosek had claimed to his commander that the heroin was for his own personal use, and he made that same assertion to me. However, my calculations indicate that the amount of heroin that was seized in Dosek’s home was enough to make as much as 3,000 doses of injected heroin when the level of purity was cut down to street level. I reported this fact to Colonel Blanks. As you may know Colonel Blanks is the staff judge advocate here at Norton. Colonel Blanks basically told me to ignore that fact in my report and to state that the heroin was for Dosek’s own personal use. I consider what Colonel Blanks asked me to do to be highly misleading. Furthermore, I interviewed Dosek, and from my own experience, I am quite sure that Dosek is not a heroin user. Certainly, he is not a heroin addict. I’ve seen a lot of heroin addicts because I used to live in New York City. Dosek shows none of the characteristics of a heroin addict.”**

**General Clifford was mute as I added the above explanation. “Plus,” I opened another line of concern, “It appears that someone broke into my apartment at some point in the last couple of days, and they may have planted some form of listening device. I think this because ….” At that instant, the General suddenly cleared his throat as he cut me off. “You know what I think, Captain? I think you’ve been watching too much television. There is absolutely nothing illegal going on here at Norton Air Force Base.”**

**He glared at me and sneered “There’s no kind of drug smuggling here. There’s no cover-up of drug smuggling. There’s nothing at all that you need to report on. There’s no need to open any investigation beyond what has already gone on.” Sometimes, it is best to hold one’s tongue when you are a captain who is speaking to a general who apparently thinks that you are a dumb person who watches too much television.**

**I sat stiffly in front of the general for nearly 45 seconds before I responded. “General Clifford, I hardly ever watch television.” There was silence for what seemed like half an eternity. I wondered whether he was going to chastise me, because my remark to him was thinly veiled backtalk. In the military captains should not backtalk to generals. However, from time to time, the truth must be spoken. I could see that he was displeased by what I had just said to him – the “no television” remark.**

**Then General Clifford glared menacingly at me and sneered, “Captain, you need to take your black ass back to your office and sit your black ass down at your desk and do some real work. Real work is what the American taxpayers are paying you to do.” You’re dismissed.”**

**I said no more. Once again, I saluted, and then I left his office and left the building.**

**Slumping into the seat of the Volkswagen, I breathed a gasp filled with some relief but despair dominated my emotions. I wanted to be able to tell Linda that the inspector general was on the case, and that would mean there is nothing to worry about. Or at least that would mean there is less reason to worry. I would not be able to do that. “Oh God,” I thought, “What am I going to tell Linda?”**

**My wife took it better than I thought she would. She didn’t start crying, at least not right away. Any time Linda cried, I usually dissolved into incoherence. However, by this time in our marriage, I was beginning to maintain my composure during her tears. “How could he say that?” Linda questioned me, her face showed her pain, “Did you tell him someone was in our home?”**

**It was only a week later when Colonel Blanks let me know that he was aware I had reported my suspicions of heroin smuggling to the Inspector General. We were alone in the hallway, far from his office or mine; there was no one else around. He spoke in a hushed voice when he suddenly said, “I know you went to the IG. That was not a good idea. If you were to do something like that again people would certainly feel that you’re losing your mind. In fact, maybe you should talk to the psychiatrists over at the March airbase hospital. You want to do that? You could hurt yourself and your career by talking like that. I don’t think you would want that. Would you? You could get hurt. A person could get killed.”**

**I shook my head indicating no and answered, “No, of course not. That would not be called for.” The conversation on smuggling started and ended just that abruptly. And then Colonel Blanks began speaking once again about golf and the weather -- something totally unrelated -- in a normal conversational volume. Colonel Blanks never raised the subject again, and I never discussed the subject with him on any other occasion. Several months later, General Clifford was reassigned, and not long afterwards Colonel Blanks left Norton for a new assignment. Or perhaps Blanks left Norton first; I don’t remember, and that detail is unimportant.**

**In many ways life in the Air Force was easy, at least the life of an attorney at Norton air base. I seldom worked on weekends; I seldom had work that required my attention during the evening. There was a very low level of expectation regarding research or investigation on anything lawyers worked on at the base level. Much of the work that was done was very repetitive, such as preparing reports where only a few words needed to be changed from one report to the next. Many military jobs require travel away from one’s family or living under harsh conditions in a foreign country. I never had to endure separation from family. And although sitting in an office without air-conditioning in Southern California was a hardship, it certainly did not compare to the level of hardships endured by many in the military.**

**If things had been better with Linda, life would have been good. As time passed, the memory of the Dosek case faded, although it never completely went away. Blanks was gone; Clifford was gone. I don’t remember ever seeing again the OSI agent who had tried to mislead me; I presume that he also had been reassigned. I had taken extensive daily notes on the Dosek case, and I put those notes in a file separate from my other work. It just seemed to be the right thing to do.**

**I was able to pick up new hobbies. One hobby was photography. The first camera I bought at Norton was a Kodak Instamatic; I went all out and bought the deluxe version with a regular lens and a zoom lens. Because it was the deluxe version it was not the cheapest camera on the shelf at the base exchange, it was in fact the next to cheapest. Nothing fancy at all, but you could point and take pictures, and for a year or two I was satisfied with that. I liked to do landscapes, particularly sunsets and sunrises. My joke was that sunrises were as beautiful as sunsets, but sunrises were not as popular because they came at an inconvenient time of the day. A second hobby was skiing in the San Bernardino Mountains. My third hobby was horseback riding in the Mojave Desert. But the hobby that grew into my favorite was clearly photography.**

**The bright white light in the sky**

**In August 1976, I decided to brave the inconvenience of the hour and take panoramic sunrise pictures out in the desert near Palm Springs. Since my camera wasn’t a fancy 35mm with a wide-angle lens, what I had intended to do was in fact take several shots of the horizon. I would use landmarks on the ground to take pictures that I would then lay side by side in a frame, to create what would appear to be one broad picture of the sunrise by lining up the edge of each adjoining picture utilizing a landmark on the ground.**

**It was predawn when I arrived in Coachella Valley, 5 miles outside Palm Springs. Looking towards the east, that area was barren desert in 1976, with Interstate 10 and the Little San Bernardino Mountains miles away in the distance. There was no one else around. I could see that the sun was peeking over the horizon, so I took the first picture to the north of the point where the sun was emerging over the mountain ridge. Then I snapped the second picture, being careful to line up the edges of my pictures with landmarks on the ground. The third picture, as I moved towards the south, would include the sun itself coming over the horizon. Once again, I focused on carefully lining up the edges of the picture with landmarks on the ground.**

**Suddenly, it hit me. I was so intent upon lining the pictures with landmarks on the ground that I almost didn’t notice in the second shot there was a bright white light in the sky, probably about 500 feet off the ground. I stopped taking pictures as my mouth dropped open. “What is that?” I thought. A second later, I stood almost transfixed in amazement, as my mouth gaped open. “My god, that’s a UFO. Is that a flying saucer?”**

**It appeared to be hovering about 500 feet above the top of the mountain ridge. It was larger than an airplane; in fact, it was probably closer to the size of an ocean liner. It was maybe eight miles away from me since I was standing near Highway 111 and this object was above the Little San Bernardino Mountains to the east of Interstate 10. From that distance, it appeared to be only three inches long against the horizon. But considering its distance away, my years of looking at airplanes told me that whatever it was, it was huge.**

**It was rectangular in shape, being four times as long as it was high. Its color was a brilliant white; it was far brighter than the rising sun. Plus, the rising sun was the typical yellow, the same color as the rising sun on any cloudless morning. Unlike the sun, the white object did not radiate blinding light. As everyone knows, one cannot stare at the sun without feeling that sunlight is hurting your eyes. The white light was very different; it did not hurt the eyes, and it did not have the flash sensation of a light bulb. The intense color white was steady, not glistening as if the light was being reflected from some shiny object. It seemed as if the light was a solid object.**

**The object hovered motionless to the north of the sun for what was almost a minute, I would estimate. Then it began moving towards the south and crossed over the top of the rising sun. Slowly, soundlessly it moved smoothly over the top of the rising sun as the sun cleared the ridge top. It was difficult to tell how far away it was, but I would estimate it was still about eight miles distant from where I was standing. The object moved to the south side of the sun and once again hovered motionless for what seemed to be almost a minute. Then it began to shrink in size, as if it was moving away from me towards the east.**

**I was so stunned by what I was witnessing that it was only when it appeared to be moving away, or at least shrinking in size, that the thought hit me: “I am standing here holding a camera. I should be taking pictures of this.” I took one picture when the object was at the point where it appeared to be a very bright star in the sky, although it was still close to the horizon. And then it disappeared.**

**I have never been so shocked in all my life. “That was a flying saucer. I just saw a flying saucer,” I thought. There was a large rock nearby, large enough to sit down. I sat there for several minutes as I tried to fathom what I had just seen. There was no question about it, I thought, “That was a flying saucer.”**

**When I got home, I rushed to tell Linda what I had seen. She stared at me with a blank expression on her face. She didn’t believe a word I said, partly because she thought I was kidding. Her response was somewhat led by the fact that several days beforehand Linda, I and a friend had a conversation about what we would do if we saw a flying saucer. We were just joking around, and the consensus was we would run like crazy to get away from it. So, Linda thought I was still kidding in the vein of that conversation. Later in the day, she realized I was serious, but that did not make her anymore believing.**

**That was the first day of our summer vacation; our destination was Atlanta. The blank expression on the faces of Sandra and Maurice matched Linda’s when I told them what I had seen earlier that day in the California desert.**

**Later in the afternoon, Sandra’s son Aaron provided the sitcom laugh of his infancy. He was a very cute five-year-old who had a crush on Linda; he would constantly be by her side, talking to her. But he needed to learn that there are limits to acceptable behavior. He barged into the bathroom when Linda was taking a shower and yanked back the shower curtain to see her naked. I heard the scene unfolding and I rushed into the bathroom and grabbed him, while pulling the shower curtain closed. Aaron squealed, “Get out of the way. Walter! Get out of the way, Walter!” as I dragged him out of the bathroom. Maurice came immediately and scooped Aaron up in his arms. The two went outside in the back yard for a 20-minute talk about acceptable behavior. It was hilarious. Before dinner, a very chastised Aaron apologized to Linda. “He was sorry for being bad.” After dinner, I jokingly told Maurice: “Aaron is definitely not gay.” We all had a big laugh after Aaron was put to bed, so he would not see us laughing at his childish indiscretion. We all had to be stern-faced around him that evening because he had been very bad.**

**I had the sunrise pictures developed a week later, so I expected confirmation of what I had seen. What I got was puzzling. The object was in two pictures. There was the one I took as the object shrank in size and appeared like a very bright star in the sky. It was right there in the picture. What was puzzling was the other picture; the picture that I captured before I realized the object was there. There was a white object in the exact place where I saw it hovering motionless. However, the shape of the object was noticeably different. It did not appear as a rectangle. Instead, although it was the same length, its shape was more difficult to describe. The central part of the object was a rectangle, but on the south end there was an upturn into a triangular shape and there was a like-shaped downturn on the north side. Plus, on the underside in the middle of the rectangular portion, there was a sphere that had a diameter of the same height as the rectangle. I was amazed that the shape on the photo was so different from the rectangle that I saw in the sky. There was no more than 20 seconds between when the picture was taken and when my attention focused on what was at that point a rectangle.**

**In retrospect, I realize that two things about that “flying saucer” stand out above all else. First, is the color; I refer to the brilliant white color of the object. I saw that color white again on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving in 1977. Second, I no longer have those two pictures, and the last time I can remember seeing them was when I showed them to my second wife in 1990. In all my years of dealing with the Group they have taken two sets of pictures from me. First, in August 1987, they took the film from my camera after I had photographed the two C-5’s at Westover. In the second instance, I suspect that my second wife, Genevieve, delivered the photographs to the Group. I can only speculate on what the value of those desert photos were to the Group. Apparently, the flying saucer photos were very significant, as were the pictures I took of the stealth aircraft at Westover.**

**Decades later, I am much more knowledgeable about what I witnessed near Palm Springs that August morning in 1976. The light in the sky was probably not a flying saucer. It might have been a phenomenon, the name of which I did not know in August 1976. I suspect that I saw an Einstein-Rosen bridge – a wormhole – a tear in the space time continuum. However, decades would pass before those words would have any meaning in my life.**

**October 1976**

**Life had become routine by October 1976. I was over two years into my four years of duty in the Air Force, and after the Dosek case was over, nothing had been out of the ordinary. Life with Linda had also become routine, but the routine there was that of a failing marriage and the routine was constant arguments. A new dilemma was about to present itself.**

**San Bernardino was very smoggy for most of the year, and many people suffered from hay fever symptoms. I had never had hay fever problems, so I was surprised in the winter of 1975 when I was bothered by allergies, but the problem was much worse in the fall of 1976.**

**I went to the Norton clinic because I was congested, coughing and had a sore throat. I suppose I presented with symptoms that were an easy diagnosis. “You’ve got allergies,” said the doctor, “it’s hay fever season for a lot of people. It looks like you’re one of them. There’s medicine for that. It’s Sudafed. I see that you were prescribed it last year.” He told me the pills would clear up all the problems. I took the Sudafed, but it seemed that I felt worse. My congestion was gone, but I felt feverish, plus I was not sleeping well. I returned to the doctor, and his solution was to double my dosage of the allergies medicine.**

**It was many years later that I discovered that I am highly allergic to medicines such as Sudafed. In 1976, my reaction was extreme. I stopped sleeping as the active ingredient in Sudafed – pseudoephedrine – took its toll on my nervous system. What made things even worse was the level of argument and discord that was the norm in my home with Linda. We always argued, so it was not unusual that we were arguing then. It was not unpredictable when we separated at that time, and I went to stay in a motel. I had not slept for days, and my judgment was obliterated, even though I felt energized. I decided to see a civilian doctor because I had lost faith in the Norton clinic. The civilian doctor recommended that I stop taking Sudafed, but the damage was already done.**

**I went to the legal office out of uniform. That was crazy, but to me it seemed perfectly okay. That earned me a trip to the mental health unit at the Air Force hospital at March Air Force Base.**

**I got to the March hospital early in the evening. They gave me oral sedative medicine, and I was told to try to rest. I was directed to a bed that was assigned to me. A woman, who I later learned was the unit’s lead psychologist, sat in a chair next to the bed and talked with me. She seemed very nice; she was dark-haired and spoke with a British-sounding accent.**

**“How do you feel about being here in the hospital?” she asked in a soft, soothing voice. I responded, “Actually, I feel really good about being here, because for the first time in many days the cold electricity in my veins is fading away.” She looked puzzled, “Electricity? What do you mean?” I started to answer in detail, but instead I said, “I’m very tired, I am going to sleep now. Nice talking to you,” and with that, I closed my eyes and fell asleep. I do vividly remember that for the first time in many days I felt tired, and for the first time in many days, the sickly feeling within me seemed to be quickly dissipating. I slept until after dawn – more than ten hours later.**

**When she saw clearly that I was asleep, the psychologist left the room and went out into the ward’s common area. Mr. Greene, the administrative head of the mental health unit at March AFB hospital, was in the common area. He was surprised to see her so soon after sitting down next to my bed. Mr. Greene asked, “What’s up? Did he tell you to get the hell out? Is he being unruly?”**

**Captain Merlange shook her head, indicating her answer to that question was negative. “No, he was very calm and friendly. He fell asleep in less than two minutes.” Marcus Greene stopped writing the report he was preparing on the ward’s maintenance needs. “What!” Greene exclaimed quietly, “How is that possible? He was referred here as acutely manic. He just fell asleep?” In disbelief, Mr. Greene walked briskly to my room and looked inside. I was asleep in my bed. Greene mumbled, “I would not believe it if I did not see it with my own eyes.” He turned to his psychologist and said, “That’s impossible. No one who is acutely manic could fall asleep within minutes like that, not even after taking an oral sedative. Not even a powerful sedative. Well, that’s one for the record books.”**

**First thing in the morning, I was told that my blood needed to be drawn for tests, and a technician drew blood from my arm. The results of those blood tests undoubtedly showed the presence of a substance in my system to which my body was reacting. That substance was Sudafed – pseudoephedrine. However, those tests were intentionally ignored by my treating doctor. And years later, the results of those blood tests were missing from my Air Force medical records.**

**I was immediately diagnosed as manic-depressive – bipolar illness – by my treating doctor, a psychiatrist named Major Carl B. Steinbacher. I was never given any psychological tests. My immediate recovery was ignored. The fact that I did not become depressed was ignored. What seemed to be most important was the fact that I was diagnosed with a mental illness and placed on lithium medication. At the time, I realized that my value as a witness in the Dosek matter was probably destroyed.**

**Years later, after careful review of my medical history, a team of doctors in San Francisco concluded in 1994 that the Steinbacher diagnosis was wrong. Plus, it was determined that the misdiagnosis had been made intentionally. Careful analysis of all the records and circumstances made it clear that Dr. Steinbacher knew I was not bipolar. In most likelihood, the Group paid him a bribe to destroy my credibility. What I experienced in October 1976 was an adverse, allergic reaction to a substance that my body deemed to be toxic. That substance was a sympathomimetic amine known as pseudoephedrine – a chemical similar in nature to crystal methamphetamines.**

**Dr. Steinbacher was killed in what appeared to be a car accident after he issued his diagnosis concerning me. Too bad. He probably never got to spend much of his bribe money. Tough luck. Or was his death murder? Did he do something that made the Group nervous? I have observed that the Group does not like to be nervous about their activities, and I would not be surprised if his death was a homicide designed to ensure his silence.**

**My marriage to Linda only lasted a few more months. By the spring of 1977 we were separated, and a divorce was underway. The divorce was fiery because Linda decided that this divorce was a money-making opportunity that should not be passed up, even though all that was at stake was a few thousand dollars. We had a divorce trial to determine the division of our property. Linda perjured herself shamelessly at trial during the Fall of 1977, and she walked away with a judgment that was more than she deserved.**

**It seemed that half the base knew that we were having a made-for-TV divorce. That notoriety may have nearly cost Linda her life, because in November 1977 someone drained all the brake fluid out of her car, and it was an accident waiting to happen. If a brake failure incident did occur while she was driving, I was probably going to be blamed for her injuries or her homicide, since in most cases the murder of a woman is by the hands of her husband or lover.**

**Life was so much better after we went our separate ways. I moved back into the BOQ, although this time I did not have the nice one-bedroom apartment. All that was available were studios, but at least this unit was farther from the runway. I shared a kitchen with an Air Force Academy graduate. He was gone a lot of the time, since he was a crew member on the C-141’s and they travelled a lot. I became better acquainted with the other single officers. We did single guy stuff, and that was a lot better than arguing with Linda.**

**I went on a vacation back East. I visited my sister and Maurice in Boston. Aaron was the perfect nephew, and the three of them seemed happy. Irene was living in Boston, so I visited her as well. She had moved on with her life. She was pregnant. Her godmother was very ill. Irene said, “Godmother is in assisted living because she has cancer. She may be terminal.” I visited her godmother for an hour, and she was visibly sickly, but she had the same playful spirit that she had when I was in law school.**

**Godmother asked me regarding Irene, “Is that your baby in there?” I could tell that she was just kidding, but I thought I better give a crystal-clear answer, just in case.**

**“No,” I said with a laugh, “there is no way I am the father.” She responded, “OK. Just checking.” A few months later, Irene had a daughter.**

**In San Bernardino, there was not a lot to choose from in the women companionship department. That was the case until Camilla Jones came to Norton. In the summer of 1977, word spread quickly among the Black, single officers that a new lieutenant, a Black woman, had been assigned to Norton. Almost everyone had met her before me, and all the guys agreed that Camilla was a catch. I was outside the BOQ one hot afternoon washing my 280Z sports car when a Volkswagen pulled into the parking lot and a woman emerged. I knew immediately that it was Camilla because she fit her description perfectly.**

**“Hi, Camilla, I’m Walter Lewis. It’s nice to finally meet you.” The introduction was as simple as that. She didn’t seem surprised that I knew her name. We talked about the weather. I remember it well because I told her that I had been at Norton for years, and I could assure her that Norton is a desert. “There is one thing that you can count on around here,” I said with authority, “it hardly ever rains. It probably won’t rain until November.” That turned out to be laughable because it rained the next day. Apparently, it helps to say something comically wrong when you meet a good-looking woman, because when I saw her again a few days later we had a big laugh about my failure as a weather forecaster.**

**Camilla had graduated from Oberlin College in Ohio with a degree in movie making. She was assigned to the unit at Norton that made recruiting films featuring the Air Force, as well as training films. This was her first assignment on active duty. She had never been married, but she was not living alone. Her sister, Natalie, and three-year-old nephew, Freddie, lived with her in an apartment in San Bernardino.**

**We started dating. There were plenty of places and things to show her. She liked to go to the beach, so we did that a lot after work. Camilla and I, as well as Camilla’s sister and the sister’s son would pile into Camilla’s car and drive to Newport Beach. Her nephew loved to put his feet in the water, and Camilla and her sister were very entertaining. They would sing duets. I used to tell the two of them, “You two are the only people except Elton John who actually know the words to** [**“Bennie And The Jets”**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2rTBWA7KMA) **. They performed a dance routine while they sang Elton John’s song.**

**Plus, Camilla liked to have her picture taken, and that was fine with me. I had a new Canon 35mm camera and plenty of film. We enjoyed many sunsets in coastal Orange County and in the San Bernardino mountains. We especially loved a small beach in Laguna, where a magnificent ocean-front home and the entire neighborhood were a wonderful complement to the stunning California sunsets over the Pacific Ocean.**

**A beach with a house on the side

Description automatically generated**

**Treasure Cove, near Newport Beach, north of Laguna Niguel, California**

**[A person standing on a beach

Description automatically generated](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IjJcdvtITs)**

**[Camilla is standing on the beach pictured above at sunset on a typical Wednesday](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IjJcdvtITs)**

**[There came a point when I was having dinner with Camilla, her sister and nephew nearly all the time. I enjoyed their company. We were very compatible.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IjJcdvtITs)**

**[I had heard about a night club in Orange County, in Santa Ana, that was getting a lot of favorable buzz. So, Camilla and I decided to go one](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IjJcdvtITs) Saturday night in August 1977. The club’s furnishings were nice, and the music was good. But as was typically the case, all the songs played were loud and with a fast beat. At one point late in the evening, we created our own slow song in a corner of the club that was away from the crowds. That was a hugely sensual experience for me. I could not wait to get back to her home.**

[**“Somewhere In My Lifetime”**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IjJcdvtITs)

**There is nothing in the World prettier than a pretty woman singing a pretty song.**

**I drove back to her apartment. Natalie and Freddie were asleep; it was after three in the morning. Camilla looked so good; she always did. I was hoping this would be the night we slept together, but Camilla said the time was wrong. Not one to give up easily, she and I joked around the subject of sex for almost an hour as we ate a late-night snack and did some kissing. It was late, and I finally realized that I would be sleeping in my BOQ room, so I hit the road. Her apartment was only a few miles from the base, and the easiest way to get home was to go through Norton’s back gate.**

**It was around 4:45 AM, as I drove down one of the two very narrow and deserted roads leading to the back gate of Norton air base.**

**When I was about a half mile from the back gate to the base, suddenly, I realized that there was a person lying on his stomach in the middle of the road. I slammed on the brakes in full-blown panic. Since I was going very fast, my car’s wheels screeched loudly and the smell of burning rubber filled the passenger compartment. I just barely avoided hitting the person as my Nissan 280Z sports car skidded to a stop. In fact, I came within six feet of literally running over the person. At the very last second, he – the person in the road was a man – sprang into motion and jumped to his feet.**

**I stopped less than six feet from the man. I was burning angry – he had almost ruined my perfect no accidents record. I quickly lowered the driver’s side window and yelled; “Hey, what’s wrong with you, fool? I almost killed your dumb ass! You fuckin’ idiot laying on the road, out in the middle of the street in the dark!”**

**The man responded with a fake sound of calmness, but with an almost pleading voice: “Please, help us! There’s a hurt woman over there!” he said as he pointed off to the side of the road. In the near pitch-black darkness, I could barely make out that there was another person, apparently a woman, lying face down on the passenger side of the road, maybe 20 feet away. Plus, there was a person kneeling next to her – bending over her, as if he was assisting her in some way.  
  
A few seconds later, another man stepped out of the darkness on the opposite side of the street. That being the driver’s side of the street. He was massive – a very big man; he could have easily played linebacker for the Pittsburgh Steelers. The linebacker-looking-guy started yelling: “Please, sir, there is a hurt woman over there next to the road! Please, please get out of your car and help her!”  
  
 My only thought was clear: “Hell, no. What in the goddamn hell is this?”   
  
Paranoia told me: “Walter, there is no way in the world that you’re getting out of this car. Absolutely, no way in the world.”  
  
The man who had approached from the driver's side of the road and the fool who had lay in the middle of the road, were now both standing right in front of my car. I turned my headlights to high beam, so I could see their faces clearly for at least 30 seconds.**

**The two men eased a step towards my car, while still positioning themselves directly in front of the car; they were maybe five feet in front of my bumper, and they were inching closer. I did not want them any closer, so I threw the gear shift into reverse and shot backwards about ten feet. As I shifted into reverse, my car’s back-up lights came on, and for a fraction of a second, I glanced in the rear-view mirror. Thank God!  In my rear-view mirror were the images of four men, twenty feet away, crouched over and sprinting towards the back of my car.  
  
In an instant, I yelled out: “Get out of the way!” to the two fools standing on the road in front of me. By now it was clear that the two were trying to block me from moving forward. My foot was on the clutch; I hit the gas and ran the engine up to around 6,000 RPM for about 1.5 seconds. And then I popped the clutch.**

**My thoughts were very clear: These people are about to kill me.  
  
My Nissan 280Z paid for itself that night; in the next six seconds that sports car roared to 60 MPH on my way to 85 MPH and safety.  
  
When I popped the clutch, I fully expected to kill the two men who were standing in the road. I wanted to kill them. But in fact, they both managed to get out of the way. In a flash, the fool who had lay in the road did a backwards somersault in his successful effort to avoid death by speeding car. My head reflexively jerked in his direction as I sped past. He demonstrated remarkable athleticism as he spun to avoid being struck by my accelerating Nissan. I did not see how the football player cheated death.**

**Even though I am an accomplished martial artist – a black belt in Korean karate – Tae Kwon Do – I am forever grateful that I did not have to deal in hand-to-hand combat with a man who could do a backwards somersault from a position of standing still.**

**I was not that far from the rear gate of Norton. There was always an armed, uniformed sentry at the base’s gate, and I was so glad to see him and the 9mm semi-automatic pistol on his belt. Plus, there was a fully automatic M16 assault rifle leaning against the wall in the sentry kiosk, right near him. I was so relieved to see him, although I did not know the guard personally; we had never met before that night, and I do not remember the man’s name or description.**

**I pulled up to the guard and, amid the excitement of the moment, near breathlessly, I stammered out: “I’m Captain Lewis from the legal office. There are a bunch of men, maybe eight, about a half mile back down the road that runs along the perimeter fence next to the base. I am convinced they’re up to no good – maybe carjacking or assault. Maybe even something worse than that, you should send a bunch of squad cars down there to check it out right away. Exercise extreme caution because they’re probably armed! And I think those guys mean bad business!”   
  
The guard had a shocked expression on his face; he then snapped to full military attention, saluted me and barked loudly:” I’ll get on it immediately, sir!”  
  
That was good enough for me. I returned his salute with proper military decorum and then drove the few blocks to my home, in the safety of Norton’s bachelor officers’ quarters. I showered quickly and went straight to bed. It was very late at night, just an hour before dawn. I was exhausted and fell soundly asleep within a few minutes. This event happened on a Saturday night/Sunday morning.**

**I decided not to tell anyone about what had happened that night because I felt I would not be believed. I was carrying the burden of a manic-depressive diagnosis and I felt that anything out of the ordinary would be interpreted as the onset of an episode of that illness. By that time, I fully realized that my value as a witness was destroyed concerning any aspect of the case that had thrown such a shadow over my life. I was taking medicine and meeting periodically with a doctor – a psychiatrist. I knew his standard opening question to me “So, what’s happening in your life?” I felt that the answer “Eight guys tried to kill me,” would probably put me back into the hospital. Psychiatrists are like hammers; they are constantly seeing nails.**

**Camilla and I became lovers, and life was good.**

**Things were so good that I really wasn’t that bothered by the fact that Linda took me to the financial cleaners in the divorce. I had my freedom, and that was all that really mattered. I just needed to get the Volkswagen back from Linda. And pay her the thousands of dollars I was ordered to pay over the next year.**

**CHAPTER SEVEN**

**Norton Air Force Base**

**Thanksgiving Week, November 1977**

**At the time of our separation in January 1977, I loaned Linda, my soon to be ex-wife, the 1970 Volkswagen Bug that my parents had given me as a college graduation present in 1970. My dear sweet Linda, who at that point was winning the Great Divorce War of 1977, was to keep the blue Volkswagen, free of charge, until she was able to buy a car for herself in a few months. The plan was simple: I would keep our other family car. That of course meant that I would have to make the hefty monthly car payments, since the 280Z sports car was not fully paid for. I would also pay the insurance bill for both cars.**

**Linda was taking my financial life to the cleaners. When she was on the witness stand during trial, there were not two consecutive honest statements that came out of her mouth. She lied her head off in order to rip off as much of my money as possible. By the end of the divorce proceedings, I would be deeply in debt and living from paycheck to paycheck. The dollar amount of my debt, after the divorce court’s ruling following our two-day divorce trial, equaled about 80% of my Air Force total annual pay. I had come a long way from my pre-marriage financial condition. When I met and then dated Linda, I had thousands of dollars in my savings and stock market accounts. After the divorce trial, almost all my assets had moved from my bank account to Linda’s bank account under the terms of the judge’s ruling. Linda should have won an Academy Award, because during the time we dated before marriage she came across as the sweetest person ever. However, by the time the dust settled after the divorce, all that sweetness was gone with the wind.**

[**“When your heart’s on fire, the smoke gets in your eyes”**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57tK6aQS_H0)

**Eleven months had passed since we separated, and it was the Monday before Thanksgiving in 1977. I had been told through the grapevine that Linda was loaning my Volkswagen out as a dune buggy and people were hot-rodding and careening around in the VW on the sand dunes in the Mojave desert. I got Linda on the telephone and told her that sort of foolish activity could easily damage my car. That was not something I could ignore.**

**Linda said “Come get the car. I don’t need it. I’ve got a new car anyway.” She said that she had bought a new car a month earlier. “Come get it. I haven’t driven it for a long time.” That was annoying, and it was probably meant to be just that. I asked her whether the car was in good shape, and she responded, “Drive it and see.”**

**“I’ll come tomorrow at lunch time,” I told her. That would be the Tuesday before Thanksgiving.**

**A co-worker, Roy, drove me to Riverside that day. The Volkswagen was in the parking lot at Linda’s apartment complex, so it wasn’t hard to find. It was pitiful to see. The car was covered in dust; it looked like it had been months since it was last washed. I opened the door and started the car. It was reassuring that the car started on the first hit of the ignition, but the engine was running a little rough.**

**I said to Roy “Thanks again for the ride. Why don’t you head back to the office? I’m going to let it warm up and clean off the windows. I’ll be a few minutes behind you.”**

**I looked the car over. It was dirty, but otherwise it looked okay. The oil level was within limits.** **The engine smoothed out and was running okay. I looked in the glove compartment. There was mail in the glove compartment that was postmarked within the last week. I shook my head, because Linda had given me the impression that she had not driven the car for a month; apparently, she had been in the car within the week. It was like Linda to be difficult for little reason.**

**I wiped off the windows with an old towel that was in the trunk of the car. It was not hard to imagine that the car had been used as a dune buggy, but it was good to see that there were no dents in the car. I sat down in the driver’s seat, adjusted the seat to fit me, and put the car into reverse. The transmission was smooth as I pulled out of the parking space, shifted into first and headed slowly up the driveway toward the street. The car was rolling, and the steering seemed normal and responsive. I tapped the brakes a few times, and the brakes seemed normal. I stopped at the street, and then turned right, heading for the Interstate 15 freeway.**

**The freeway entrance was only a block away. I noticed there were two hitchhikers sitting at the entrance. One of them held a sign with the hand-written words “Las Vegas.” They looked like hippies. I felt generous; I just got my car back. I made the impulsive decision to give them a ride. The windows were down. I yelled “I can only take you a few miles before I turn in another direction. Want a few miles?” The two men jumped up smiling. “Sure, one step at a time,” said one of the men. I pushed the passenger door open, and the men climbed in. One sat in the back and the other sat in the passenger seat. The man in the back seat was very talkative, but I don’t remember the other man saying anything, although I suspect that he said hello as he got in the car. I presumed that the two men were friends, but I do not remember whether that was told to me. It might have been that they were just headed to the same destination.**

**I drove down the entrance ramp and merged into the slow lane, then pulled into the lane next to the fast lane. I intentionally drove under 60, as a precaution, because the engine had sounded rough a few minutes earlier.**

**The man in the back seat was talking nonstop about Las Vegas, but I could barely hear him over the noise from the open windows. The man in the passenger seat was silent.**

**After a few minutes, we were approaching an all-lane traffic jam. I could see that all the lanes were stopped, so I tapped the brakes to start slowing the car around 400 yards away. I was stunned because the brake pedal went to the floor. There was no resistance; the brake pedal felt like a clutch. And the car was not slowing at all. I had total brake failure at around 58 MPH. There was little more than 400 yards of roadway before I must stop, or the Volkswagen would collide at full speed with other cars.**

**I scanned the road ahead. There was no way to swerve off the road because of concrete walls along the side of the freeway. The lane I was in was the lane with the most distance before impact.**

**The distance was down to 250 yards when my life started flashing before my eyes. I remembered vividly a news story of a commercial jet that lost power on takeoff. The pilot was interviewed after the crash landing and he said, “All I could do was point the airplane in the direction that had the most real estate.” The lane I was in had the most real estate before the crash, so I stayed in that lane.**

**The passenger in the backseat was still talking gleefully until we were around 50 yards from impact. He stopped talking suddenly and said no more. Then he inhaled sharply because he was about to scream at the top of his lungs. We were about 10 feet from impact and travelling at full speed; the impact was going to kill us all. There was not going to be time for him to scream.**

**I watched the distance to impact swiftly shrink. For whatever reason, it never occurred to me to scream, although I could clearly hear my passenger’s loud inhale coming from the back seat.**

**There was only six feet to impact, when suddenly my entire field of vision was enveloped in a pure white light that blocked everything else from sight. Everything outside the car was gone, enveloped in the bright white light. Everything inside the car was gone. I could only see the intense white light. Then the car just stopped.**

**There were no screeching tires. There was no lurching forward as one would expect in a sudden stop when travelling at highway speed. There was no smell of burning rubber.**

**Just as suddenly as the white light came, the white light disappeared. The Volkswagen was fully stopped just inches from the rear bumper of the car ahead.**

**I had the feeling that a long period of time had passed, even though apparently the length of time was no more than a few seconds. My hands were in my lap and my feet were flat on the floor of the car. I felt relaxed, and for a few seconds I tried to collect my thoughts. Then I heard my passenger’s gagging noises coming from the backseat. The man in the back was lying across the seat, halfway on the floor. He was gasping for breath; he seemed to be unable to breathe, like he was having a heart attack or stroke.**

**I did not know what to do. I was wearing a phony smile as I turned to the man and said, “It looks like we had some brake problems there for a moment. But all’s well that ends well. It’s Ok now. You’ve got to breathe. Just calm down and breathe.” My feelings were those of total embarrassment. I was the driver, and this was my car. We almost crashed. The fault was mine. I felt responsible for the extreme condition of the man in the back. I wondered if he needed mouth-to-mouth; he didn’t seem to be breathing. I glanced for a moment at the passenger in front seat. He was fine apparently; he was looking at me and smiling. He looked calm, very much unlike the person in the back. The person in the back looked like he might die.**

**“Please, calm yourself and breathe,” I kept repeating to my passenger on the backseat. He seemed to improve a little at a time, and his chest started heaving after I did chest compressions. He was breathing. That was a relief. I feared that I might have to give him mouth to mouth resuscitation, and that prospect was horrible.**

**“Total brake failure. That was total brake failure.” I thought. “I’ve got to get off the road.” I put on my emergency flasher lights and motioned to the cars nearby that I was pulling off the road. The car was surrounded by other cars, but the cars to my right cooperated with my intention to slowly pull over to the shoulder. I gave the car enough gas to creep across the lanes of traffic and reached the shoulder, as the car rolled slowly to a stop.**

**“You guys have got to get out,” I told my two passengers. “It’s not safe. Obviously, I’m having some bad brake problems. You can walk off the highway from here.” The man in the back had recovered enough to get out of the car; he was helped to his feet by the other passenger. I watched them walk away. I was relieved to see that the one man looked normal again. He was talking, although the gleeful banter was gone.**

**I sat there for a few minutes wondering what to do next. I was not very far from an exit. I decided to roll very slowly on the shoulder to the exit, if I could keep the car rolling slowly enough to stay in control. As I inched down the shoulder, I remembered that there was a gas station near the exit that had a mechanic. That would be perfect. At least, there would be a telephone. I rolled very slowly to the exit, testing the brakes from time to time. There was no doubt about it. The brakes weren’t working. I did not dare go faster than walking. I steered the crippled Volkswagen into the service station near the highway. The mechanic watched me slowly roll onto the property.**

**“What’s the problem?” he said. I’m sure the attendant had some idea because he was standing near the gas pumps and had watched me approach as I crept down the street and into the station.**

**“It’s the brakes,” I responded in a voice filled with stress and fatigue. It had taken a long time to slowly roll the car to the gas station, even though the distance was less than a mile. It was a stressful trip. Every second I feared that the car might start rolling too fast. I had my right hand on the parking brake for the entire trip, figuring that the parking brake would stop the car when I was going at a snail’s pace. If that failed, I planned to jump out of the car if it went out of control.**

**“I just had total brake failure out on the highway. The brakes are totally gone. The brake pedal felt just like the clutch when I hit the brakes at almost 60. It was a mess because traffic is all backed up out there.”**

**“No kidding, that’s probably a leak in the system. I’d bet a lot of money on that. The car stopped though?” said the mechanic. “Yea,” was my response, “ I managed to not hit anything and got off the road.” The mechanic assured me he could fix the problem with the brakes. He presumed there had been a leak that drained the system of most of its fluid. “It won’t take long to fix – less than an hour. You must still have some fluid, or the car wouldn’t have stopped. I’ll check out the whole brake system and get you refilled. I know Volkswagens. Work on ‘em all the time. It’s an easy fix.”**

**“I’ll wait for the car if it’s just going to take an hour. I’ll wait,” I said as I exhaled deeply.**

**At first, I stood inside the station, but I soon decided to take a walk outside. Nervous energy wouldn’t let me stay still. I walked down the side of the building and walked into a field behind the station. In the 1970’s, there were a lot of fields in San Bernardino. There was a small boulder that could serve as a chair. Like a good Boy Scout, I surveyed the surroundings for rattlesnakes and spider webs – for black widow spiders. It was always a good idea to do that in this part of Southern California. There were none, so I sat down on the rock, after dusting off a spot with my left hand. It was warm from the sunlight. I tried to make myself comfortable, even though there was no back support.**

**As I sat there, I was slowly overwhelmed with a feeling of despair. Tears came to my eyes. It finally hit me with full force. I had just escaped a horrible car crash and almost certain death. A front-end crash in a Volkswagen Bug at highway speed would not have been survivable. The Volkswagen’s fuel tank is in the front of the car. There probably would have been an explosion added to the crushing impact of the collision. The two hippie-looking hitchhikers would also surely have been incinerated along with me. If Linda had driven the car instead of me, she would have suffered the same fate. Plus, if Linda had been the victim, the police would have quickly suspected foul play when they realized there were no braking skid marks on the pavement. In most likelihood, I would have been the prime suspect in her homicide, because of our loud and angry divorce. I probably would have been arrested almost immediately and charged with her murder.**  
 **It was a warm day in Southern California, despite the fact the calendar was near the end of November. The temperature was in the high 60’s. If I wasn’t embarrassed for the mechanic to see me cry, I probably would have sought the relative comfort of the station’s waiting room, but I preferred to be alone. Men don’t cry, or, at least, they don’t let other people see them crying.**

**From the garage, the sound of music floated in the air. “The mechanic has a radio on,” I mumbled, without really focusing on the sound. The music continued. It was Black people’s church music, with good vocals and a large choir in the background. I figured that when I saw that guy in a little while, I would ask him what radio station was playing. I had never heard that song before, and the part I could hear sounded very mellow, although I could barely make out a lot of the words, I could clearly hear “God favored me.”**

**I felt drained and sick to my stomach. It didn’t help a bit that the sun was intense. In true California style, there was not a cloud in the sky. I remember thinking “It would be nice to fall asleep, but that will never happen in this sun and heat; plus, there is no way to lean backwards. There is no back support.” But I closed my eyes and reflected on what had happened such a short time before. The bottom line of that experience was a stunner: I almost just died in a car crash. A front-end wreck in my Volkswagen Bug. What a lousy way to go,” I thought as I swatted at a buzzing fly. My eyes were closed. Two more songs wafted through the air from the service station, but I could not make out the lyrics.**

**I had asked Linda the night before whether there were any problems with the car. Her words were, in Linda’s typically sarcastic and argumentative tone: “Drive it and see.” Tears were running down my face. Never in 1,000 years would I have put Linda in a situation where she might be harmed. But Linda almost jokingly sat me down in a car that had no brakes. At that point, I doubted that Linda was totally unaware of the car’s brake problems, and she had purposefully failed to disclose them even when asked about the car’s mechanical status. The realization of her thoughtlessness was very saddening. That’s why I was crying, not like a child, but like a victim. I realized then on a level that I had not reached before that my life would have been much better off if she had never been a part of it. “So be it,” I thought, “that is what divorces are for.” I chided myself – “Stop with the waterworks. You are such a crybaby.”**

**The heat was annoying, and it also hit me that I was thirsty. “Thirsty and hungry,” I said aloud. I skipped lunch to pick up the Volkswagen. I drifted along in my thoughts while waiting for the repairs to be completed. Around 45 minutes later, the mechanic shouted in my direction, “Hey, hey, mister, let me talk to you.” I realized it was the mechanic’s voice. I jerked to attention as the auto mechanic called out to me from the corner of the garage.**

**For a moment, I was totally disoriented. I struggled for a few seconds, as the words “What? Where am I?” fleeted through my head. I tried to hold onto some fading, dream-like thoughts. And then, the thoughts were gone. I remembered the brake failure clearly and completely. However, all that happened after sitting on the rock, crying, and hearing the church music – all recollection of what transpired next was gone. They faded like a dream; evaporating like a dream disappears as the dreamer awakens.**

**In fact, years would pass before my dreams at night, beginning in 1996, would replay again and again that afternoon on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving in 1977 when I spent an extraordinary time in Heaven, talking with the God of Abraham.**

**“Coming,” I yelled to the mechanic, as I walked stiffly out of the field. I reached a conversational distance from the man dressed in oil-splattered jeans and a khaki shirt. His voice sounded alarmed as he said, “I checked out the entire system. You were right – there wasn’t a drop of brake fluid in the car. So, I searched for a leak. Here’s the thing. There was no leak. I went over every inch of the braking system.”  
  
I listened intently as he told me “Dude, you’ve got enemies. Serious enemies. Someone took the brake fluid out of your car.” I nodded my head soberly. “Yea, I know about having enemies. Can you fix it?”**

**Over the next 20 minutes, the mechanic re-filled the braking system with fluid and tested the system for performance. As I paid the man, I asked “What radio station were you playing a little while ago?”**

**“What do you mean?’ he responded, “There’s no radio on. The radio fell off the shelf yesterday. It’s broke.”**

**“But there was church music playing,” I stuttered, shrugging my shoulders. He looked at me blank-faced. “I wanted to ask you what station that was.” I thanked him and drove off towards Norton. The base was only a mile away. I was all sweaty in the late-season California heat. I wanted to change my uniform shirt before going back to the office. It was such an advantage that my apartment in the bachelor officers’ quarters was less than 500 yards from the Norton legal office.  I felt emotionally and physically drained as I walked slowly up the stairs to the second floor of my apartment building. The base bachelor officers’ quarters were built like Motel 6, with the hallway to each unit on the outside of the building.**

**I had an intense, strange feeling that was haunting me. I felt like I had forgotten something important. A feeling like when you forget to turn off the oven before you leave home. Something has been forgotten, but you can’t remember what that something is all about.**

**I plodded slowly to my door, when suddenly my head jerked backwards, not because something had struck my face but because my body had reacted involuntarily to the fact that in a split second a bullet from a large caliber sniper rifle had struck the air within four inches of my nose. But the bullet did not hit me. Light blue streaks of haze filled my field of vision. The bullet’s flight path slammed to a stop in the air inches away from my face, right between my eyes. And then, the bullet soundlessly dissolved into a liquid, which was suspended in the air, like a ping pong ball-sized bubble of liquid lead. Then, the heavy, thick liquid splashed painlessly against my face, probably because my legs were still moving forward. I walked right into the bubble of lead. My head snapped backwards, but that was mostly just a reaction to the fact that a foreign object had just splashed against my face. There was no pain. There was no sound. A force field had at that moment saved me from a sniper’s bullet that was fired at my head.**

**Firearms have been a part of Earth’s battles since the Siege of De’an in China in 1132 – almost 1,000 years ago. But all technology eventually becomes obsolete. Nothing lasts forever.**

**Things happened so quickly. Even though I could see what was going on at eye level in front of me, my legs were still walking forward. Within a fraction of a second, I had literally walked into the dissolved bullet. Liquid lead splashed all over my face, causing my head to snap backwards, even though the force of the impact was not severe. The thick liquid was air temperature; it was not scalding hot. I was not burned in the slightest, even though the melting temperature of lead is normally 621.5 degrees Fahrenheit.**

**My heart was racing. My immediate reaction was to close my eyes, so I shut both eyes tight. I also immediately stopped breathing. To the extent that I had any thoughts at all, my thoughts were that I did not want to get what I presumed to be liquid lead into my eyes or my lungs.**

**The key to my door was already in my hand as I walked up the pathway, and even though my eyes were closed I knew that the door to my apartment was to my immediate left. So, with my eyes still closed, I turned to my left and felt like a blind man for the doorknob, and then I fumbled to stick the key in the keyhole in the middle of the doorknob. This was done while my eyes were closed and while holding my breath.**

**I fumbled for a few seconds at the keyhole before I was able to slide the key into the hole. I turned the key to the right, as I had done so many times before expecting to feel the tumbler rotate and the door unlock. To my surprise, the mechanism did not rotate. It felt stuck, so I twisted harder. Instead of the tumbler rotating as usual, my key literally broke in two. The tip half of the key stuck in the lock, and I could feel that I had the back half of the key between my thumb and my forefinger.**

**I was starting to run out of breath, because even though only 20 seconds had passed, I had not taken a deep breath when the lead splashed on my face. I wanted to get off that pathway as quickly as possible, since I felt a second sniper’s bullet might be fired. I was still completely out in the open.**

**An idea hit me: I had on my keychain the key to my neighbor Dixon’s old apartment. “Use it,” I thought, “You’ve got to get off this walkway. You’ve got to get to cover, and you need to get this liquid off your face.” I moved so quickly that I almost ran the distance from my front door to Dixon’s front door. As I moved along the pathway, I traced my hand along the wall, because I was blind –my eyes were still closed. I would feel Dixon’s door frame and then I could feel for the doorknob. I was right. I found the doorknob and my fingers fumbled for the key. My lungs were burning as I rotated the lock and flung the door open. I ran for the bathroom shower, thankful that there was virtually no furniture in the room that could cause me to trip and fall flat on my face.**

**I stuck my head under the showerhead and turned on the water full blast. My body was screeching at me to breathe, but my intuition told me that I did not want to inhale lead. I waited a few more seconds before I breathed in a huge draw of air. I let water cascade on my face for another minute or two before I opened my eyes.**

**“What the hell just happened?” I tried to collect my thoughts as I shut the door to the apartment. My head and clothes—and shoes – were drenched, but I did not feel that anything had gotten into my eyes, nor had I inhaled any of the lead.**

**It was the Tuesday before Thanksgiving in 1977. That was the day I should have stopped fearing the drug cartel. And that was probably the day those homicidal sociopaths became aware of the problem they had regarding me. Were they watching when the Volkswagen did not wreck? Did the sniper, or his spotter, see his bullet become suspended in midair and then dissolve into liquid? Did the sniper see that I was unharmed by what should have been a fatal shot? “What just happened? I don’t know; I don’t know,” I said aloud as I parted the apartment’s curtain just enough to look outside. Nothing was out of the ordinary.**

**“What should I do now?” Simple, pull another shirt and pants out of the closet, along with my backup shoes, and go to the office. Your lunch break is over. You have clients to meet.” That’s what I did. Fifteen minutes later, I walked through the door of the legal office suite, with a big pretend smile on my face.**

**“There you are,” said Phil. “Good timing. Your first two clients were no-shows, and Marlon took your 2 o’clock. Your 2:30 appointment just sat down. Where you been?”**

**“I had some really bad car trouble. My brakes were shot, so I had to stop at the repair station over next to the expressway. It took forever to get back here.” Phil handed me my appointment cards; the 2:30 appointment was Sergeant Sterner. There was only one person in the waiting room, so I turned to him and said “Sergeant Sterner, nice to meet you. Come with me.” Once again, I found myself consciously emphasizing the need to act perfectly normal. It was just another day going by, and here I was coming back from lunch a little bit late because of car trouble. Nothing going on of any real importance or out of the ordinary.**

**In 1996, I began having a recurring dream that I eventually suspected was a repressed memory of the actual events that transpired on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving in 1977**

**I have told quite a few people that there are things in this book that will not be believed by many readers. I fully realize that what follows falls deeply into the realm of the unbelievable. I once read that one of the differences between a fictional work – such as a novel – and a documentary is the restriction that a novel must be believable. If a novel is not believable, it will fail as literature. However, factual writing need only be true. There is no constraint with respect to believability when a writer is describing the events that happened.**

**In my recurring dream, I am seated on that large rock behind the service station, just as I always remembered. My eyes were closed, and my head was down. The sound of soft, religious music is in the air. Suddenly, I realized my surroundings felt different. The air temperature was temperate, but I didn’t feel the relentless heat of the California sun. “Is that a cloud?” I said out loud. I opened my eyes to see what was going on.**

**I was stunned and in total disbelief the instant I opened my eyes. I was no longer sitting in a sun-drenched, rocky field behind a gas station in California. I found myself in Heaven, and I was about to have a conversation with the God of Abraham. I have never in my life been more shocked. As I opened my eyes, I was suspended in a world that was totally, brilliantly white. I was not standing on the ground; I was suspended in midair, as if gravity did not exist. There was no sound. Suddenly, like a kaleidoscope, everything began to rotate and as the rotation proceeded colors appeared. Within what seemed to be only a few seconds, my entire field of vision changed from pure white to all the colors I have ever seen. And some colors I had never seen before. I was standing on a surface that was flat and transparent; a surface which seemed in many ways to be like glass. Almost instantly, somehow, I knew where I was and I knew who was on the other side of the conversation, although at no point did anyone or anything say: “Walter, meet God.” I blurted out, “I knew it! I knew it back on the highway! I’m dead! I got killed in that car crash!”**

**That is when He spoke for the first time. “You are very much alive. You are very much alive,” He repeated more slowly. “No one was injured or killed in the brake failure incident. You do not have a scratch on you.” And then, almost immediately, He said, “Do you recognize Me?” I heard His question clearly, although I realized at that point, I was not hearing sound waves. He was speaking inside my mind. Somehow, I was confident that I knew the answer to His question. “Yes, I recognize You,” I said aloud. A few seconds later I mumbled, “Is this Heaven?”**

**He answered, “If you recognize Me, in your heart you must know where you are.”**

**“How did I get here?” I was in shock, nothing seemed appropriate to say.**

**“You traveled weightlessly within the light.”**

**“Travelled weightlessly within the light?” – the words almost vibrated inside my head, as I tried to seize an accurate perception of the moment. I have never been more stunned in my entire life. There are no human words to describe what was happening. I was struggling to take in my surroundings. The scene was beyond description. For one thing, I was not standing on anything, unless the surface upon which I was standing was transparent. There was no clarity with respect to what surrounded me; there was plenty of light, but there was no sun. The sky was blue and cloudless, and the sky encompassed everything. The sky was above me and beneath me. After what felt like a few seconds, I just focused on what God was saying to me.**

**“Walter, you are alive for a purpose. The scourge of drug smuggling and addiction is becoming an immeasurable plague on Earth. A plague that must be stopped,” were His words to me. “The situation is bad now, but there is no situation so bad that it can’t get worse. And this is going to get much worse. Their end goal has nothing to do with drugs or money.” We spoke for a very long time. I am not capable of reciting the exact words of our conversation. However, to the best of my recollection, the Message that He spoke to me is set forth in the final Chapter of Destiny.**

**God said, “They drained the brake fluid from your wife’s car. They expected she would drive the car, have a wreck, and get seriously injured or killed. You would be suspected of draining the brake fluid from her car and sent to prison for the rest of your life – or a mental institution for the rest of your life. That was their plan for you. These people – these things – are homicidal sociopaths who have destroyed the lives of millions of people. To them, your life and Linda’s life are worthless.”**

**My response was: “I will get them for this. Where are they? I will track them down and get them for this. I swear it, even if it takes the rest of my life. I will get even with them. I will chase them until I catch them.”**

**I vowed in the presence of the God of Abraham that I would never falter in my efforts to bring justice to the eight criminals who had tried to kidnap me three months earlier and to those who had tried to kill Linda. I promised to destroy the whole cartel.**

**“Walter this is your destiny. Your life should have ended today, but because of your skills, character, and integrity, you have been spared. I have given you a powerful gift that you will need in your fight against these killers.**

**“I have given you the gift of invincibility. You are invincible. You cannot be killed. You cannot be defeated. You will ultimately win every battle. Do not fear a fight against eight men such as on that dark road in August. You alone could have escaped from even 8,000 men, if need be. I know that you will not compromise with wrongdoers or evil, but the struggle will be very long and at times very painful. You must and will succeed. There is no Plan B.” I looked up at him, thinking about how it might be a good idea to have some backup, because sometimes I mess things up. He immediately said, “God does not need a Plan B.”**

**I looked upon the face of God, but I could not clearly comprehend or see the entity that was speaking to me. However, what I could see totally upset any image that had ever been preached to me in Sunday school. God’s face looked very similar to my face, and I realize that God’s voice was very similar to my voice. Similar, but not the same. His voice was firm, but it was not booming or scary. There was nothing about this meeting that was frightening. God was shaped like a human, with a torso, arms, and legs, but he was very tall – easily ten feet. He wore a white dress suit, the sort that a Western man would wear to an important business meeting.**

**“Plus, the Brothers will help you and watch over you always. You met one Brother earlier today. He was one of the two hitchhikers you picked up minutes before the brake failure.” Upon hearing that, I only had to reflect a second. There was no doubt as to which of the two hitchhikers was the Brother – the one in the front passenger seat.**

**“The Brothers are special, but you will seldom see them in person. You must learn to hear and see their messages when they speak to you by telepathy as you sleep and dream. The Brothers will help you. They are very knowledgeable. Their power comes from their knowledge and technology. Trust them. They always know the future. The kidnapping in August was not the first attempt on your life. It was their fifth try. They fired at you from long range with sniper rifles on four occasions prior to August of this year,” He said.**

**All this was startling information that took time to settle in. “Can You tell me where I can find these guys – the cartel? Can You tell me exactly who they are? What should I do? Can’t you tell me what I should do?” God answered: “You and the Brothers must find them and handle this challenge. It is up to man to solve man’s problems, no matter how tough. When the going gets tough, the tough get going. Be tough.”**

**I did not know what to say next, so I stood speechless for what seemed like minutes as I tried to gather my thoughts. Apparently, I was going back to Earth. My mind turned to the stories in the Bible that had always seemed to me to be untrue.**

**I asked Him, “Did the Noah flood story actually happen?” He responded, “No, it did not. And you are about to ask Me about the Sun standing still in the sky for the Hebrews. That part of Joshua never happened. Yes, Jesus’ conception was immaculate. And the Book of Leviticus is just a compilation of the thoughts of the men who were the authors. The Bible and other religious texts from all over the World are filled with accounts from the cultures that authored the writings. The same is true of oral history. Words that are considered of divine origin may simply be the words of the men who were the authors. Unquestioning adherence to many writings that are considered of divine origin may be fruitless. However, the point of all religions should lead to Me. There is only One God, but there are many paths to Me.**

**“All humans are special to Me. There are no people more chosen than another group of people.** **Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. This Divine directive should guide interaction across the planet.”**

**I was still wide-eyed in awe, and I was about to ask a question about slavery when God answered before I spoke, “Slavery is both murder and stealing, and it is the reason why for hundreds of years many Whites did not enter Heaven. The Europeans and White Americans are deeply complicit with the huge genocide in the New World, Africa and in the Pacific that killed more than 100 million of My people. To be complicit one need not have pulled the trigger. Rationalizing the wrongdoing of others, profiting from the crimes, trying to explain away the injustices, or simply sticking one’s head into the sand during mass murder – these are all permutations of a total failure to do unto others as one would want done to themselves. This is totally unacceptable behavior. People can lie to each other about their motivations and beliefs, but I can always see what is truly in a person’s heart.**

**I cannot describe how long I spoke with God. Time seemed to be jumbled and indefinite. God related to me the Message that I was to deliver later in my life, which included references to things and places about which I knew nothing.**

**God continued, “I am aware of your virtually non-existent church attendance over the years, and your skepticism regarding parts of the Bible. Yes, the Bible, as well as the many other religious texts on Earth, are largely the writings of men and women – well-intentioned, but fallible men and women. Yes, the Red Sea did part. No, I did not tell Moses to take off his shoes when he approached Burning Bush. The Exodus author made that statement up. I asked Moses the same question I asked you: “Do you recognize Me?” Moses correctly answered thousands of years ago, as did you today.”**

**“There, said God, “you now have answers to some of the questions that you have pondered for years.” There was a long pause before God added in a zestful voice, “And, no, neither Santa Claus nor the Easter Bunny is authorized by the Bible, but let the little kids have fun.”**

**There was another long pause, and then God said “You can stay here for a while. Turn around and look behind you.”**

**I turned around and standing behind me was a young man and woman. At first, I did not recognize them, but then the man’s face became familiar, and I realized the man was my great grandfather, and the young woman was his wife.**

**“Grandpa!” I said, almost in disbelief. We embraced, and he welcomed me. I had never met his wife before that day, but I found her to be a wonderful person. Pat, Uncle Peete and Fannie Mae were also there. None of them were sickly. All were young and happy.**

**We ate a meal, and I spoke with my deceased relatives for at least an hour. Grandpa and I played six innings of baseball in a stadium filled with roaring spectators. I was very strong and hit a homerun and a triple. Grandpa pitched three innings right-handed and three innings left-handed. Our team won, but, somehow, the other team seemed pleased to lose.**

**After the game, we ate a second meal. I asked my relatives many questions “When I saw God, I felt as if he looked so much like me. How could that be?” Grandpa answered, “It is like that with everyone. Everyone here sees God as a familiar image that reminds them of themselves or Jesus, or someone like that from their own culture. Many of the women see God as a woman. God’s actual appearance is probably beyond the ability of people to comprehend, so we see what is comfortable for us.”**

**There were many people at the meals and during the ballgame. Many were dressed in clothing that was not Western. Grandpa said “There are many people here who were not Christians on Earth. There is only one Heaven and there is only one supreme being. All the religions who believe in one God are worshiping the same God. But there are many different cultural traditions and differences of language. There are different religious texts that were written by different men and women who were trying to express their feelings and account for their history. But there is only one God. I have heard him say many times that we are all the same people to Him. He shows no favoritism to any of the many different sorts of people or religions on Earth.”**

**Heaven had the best food ever, the best music ever. And the captivating aroma of a springtime morning filled the air. Let me say something about the women: All the women look like movie stars. And all the men look like Olympic athletes. There was perfection everywhere. I was looking at a crowd of people when a woman walked towards me. As she approached, I could see that she was gorgeous in every way. In an instant the crowd of passersby disappeared, and we were alone indoors. I was filled with desire as I gazed at her. Her clothes evaporated. In an instant, she was naked in front of me – facing me. She was perfection in caramel, with chocolate nipples and lush black hair at the juncture of her legs. She smiled with enjoyment as I consumed her beauty. She slowly made a 360-degree spin, so I could see all that I love. I was aware that an intensely romantic instrumental composition played in the air. Then she spoke with a calm, happy, sexy voice, which was filled with honey: “I will be here for you when you return. You will return.”**

**Here, my dream always ends, as I wake up. I always feel ready afterwards to fight any battle.**

**At the end of the day on November 22, 1977, the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, I called up Linda’s attorney and cursed out the attorney’s secretary as I expressed my displeasure that Linda had returned my car to me without telling me about its brake system problems. At the time, that seemed to be the appropriate thing to do, in part because, as the divorcing spouse, I suspected her of wrongdoing. There was at least a failure to inform me of an impending mechanical system collapse. The secretary told me “If you keep cursing and yelling at me, I’m going to hang up the phone on you.” Thirty seconds later she hung up the phone on me, because I still had things that I needed to say and apparently, she did not appreciate the tone or vocabulary in which I delivered those sentiments.**

**Later that evening, it was bedtime, but it was not late at night. Camilla was speaking in her usual calm tone of voice, as she got ready for bed. “And the mechanic said there was no leak?” she questioned.**

**“Yeah,” I responded, “he was very emphatic, saying that he had checked out the entire system, and there had been no sign of any leak.” I was already in bed as I watched her undress. This was better than any TV show, I fully realized. She took off her blouse and her beautiful breasts were barely contained within her lacy bra. I wondered whether she knew how intense I was watching her. Her matching panties were like gift wrapping as the silky material clung to the warm curves of her soft behind.**

**“You better not tell anybody about how that car stopped. That’s unbelievable, and that means it sounds crazy.” Camilla took off her bra and tossed it into the hamper. “It’s probably best not to call Linda’s attorney again. You already realize that’s a dead end. If she did that, she’s not going to admit it. Do you really think that she did that?” There was a twang of disbelief in Camilla’s voice.**

**“I know what you mean. I really can’t imagine her down on her hands and knees in the carport siphoning the brake fluid out of the Volkswagen. I don’t think she would even know how to do that. I sure wouldn’t know how to do that. It’s hard to imagine Linda doing something so criminal, but earlier today I really hadn’t thought that through when I called up her attorney. I was just mad.”**

**Camilla turned on the shower and stepped under the water. From time to time, I stopped to ponder how lucky I was that she was in my life. She had made a huge difference over the last three months. It was such a relief to have someone with whom I could confide about what was going on with the whole psychiatric problem thing and everything else.**

**A few minutes later, Camilla walked out of the bathroom wearing just a short negligée; there was nothing underneath the sheer fabric. Her nipples and the dark juncture of her legs were there to be seen. “You know how much I like that, don’t you?”**

**“Like what?” She pretended to be unaware of her seductive nudity, as she lifted the sheet and thin blanket, and climbed into bed. I pulled her to me, and our bodies melted. We had been sleeping together every night for weeks. I chuckled, and she said, “What are you thinking about that’s making you laugh?”**

**I answered, “I was just thinking about that night in August when we came back here after the disco, and I begged you for about an hour to take off your clothes. But you kept saying no. We could have had a lot of fun that night.”**

**Camilla pressed her thigh against me and said, “That night was too soon.” The best thing about going to bed when the night is still young is the fact that there is a lot of time for sexual pleasures before sleeping. And then you’re well-rested early in the morning, so the two of us could wake up before dawn and have a hot, wet encore.**

**The Wednesday before Thanksgiving passed quickly, and Thanksgiving itself was special. One of the officers cooked dinners for all the young Black officers and their spouses and friends. It was a very fun time and a pleasant interlude before what happened on the Friday after the Thanksgiving holiday.**

**The legal office was open on the Friday following Thanksgiving, although there were only a handful of people coming in for appointments. My last appointment of the day was with a young Navy seaman. I’ll call him John Dawson. He was a young Black man.**

**I don’t remember what his specific legal problem was, but I do remember that I was able to solve it easily. It was some relatively straightforward issue regarding the interpretation of a power of attorney.**

**From his appointment card, I read that Dawson was assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise. That piqued my interest, as would almost anything that had to do with airplanes.**

**“So, are you enjoying your assignment on the Enterprise? That is a very well-known aircraft carrier.”**

**Dawson did not answer right away. I had noticed from the time he sat down in front of my desk that he seemed less than happy.**

**“It’s okay for the most part, but there have been some really big problems. Race problems.”**

**“What you mean?” I asked. There is no way in the world that I could have anticipated what he was about to tell me.**

**“Earlier this year, in February, a lot of the Black sailors mutinied. We disobeyed an order to attack Uganda.” With that statement he had my full attention.**

**“What are you talking about,” I said in a hushed tone. “I’ve heard nothing of such a thing in the newspapers or on television.”**

**“Figures. There was nothing in the newspaper, at least that’s what my folks tell me. The Enterprise battle group was in the Indian Ocean back in February. We had just anchored off the coast of Mombasa, Kenya for a three-day port visit. Everything was fine. African dignitaries visited the ship; we then had an air show that was flown by the two best F-14 pilots. The two Black pilots that flew the air show were the best F-14 pilots on the Enterprise. It was the best air show ever, but they got in trouble because some of the top brass thought the maneuver was too dangerous. If they had been a little bit off in their timing, they probably would have hit the ship and sank it. But that was okay since they didn’t hit the ship. The captain got over it, and everybody thought it was a great moment when they did it.” Dawson had my full attention; this was a story about airplanes.**

**“It was great,” he said, “the two F-14’s circled the Enterprise and then flew out about 20 miles, before turning back towards the ship, flying just 20 or 30 feet off the water. As they approached the ship their speed was just a little below supersonic. They were really cookin’, and at that speed you could just barely see them comin’. They were wingtip to wingtip as they flew right at the aft of the ship. At the last second, they both dropped their wingtip, and each plane flew along the side of the ship. They were so low that they were lower than the flight deck. At the second they passed the bow of the ship, each flattened its wings so they were once again almost wingtip to wingtip. Then, in formation, they pulled nose up into a straight up climb, and within a few seconds disappeared into the cloud cover. All the sailors went wild, cheering and giving high-fives.**

**Some of the officers – the White officers – were astounded. They were not happy, probably because they knew no one else could do what those two brothers had just done and live to talk about it. Plus, a lot of the Whites were saying things like: “They could have hit the ship. They could’ve sunk the ship if they hit the stern at that speed.’ The Whites were just jealous. If you blinked at the last second, you would have missed the whole thing as they flew past the ship – they were going so fast. It was so tough; really, bad!”**

**“Damn,” I said after a few seconds, as I visualized what the F-14’s had done. “That does sound amazing. I wish I could’ve seen it. I’ve always been a lover of airplanes. Both my natural father and my adopted father were pilots in the Air Force. But you were saying something about a mutiny. Was that because of the air show? How did a mutiny happen?”**

**“No, it wasn’t because of the air show. A few days after we left port in Mombasa, the order came down to prepare the planes for an attack on Uganda because Idi Amin was holding 200 Americans. They weren’t really hostages, but there was a dispute and apparently those people weren’t free to go as soon as they wanted to leave. The Black sailors and some of the White sailors did not want to attack an African country. It’s not like we were at war with Uganda. We had heard some things about Idi Amin that sounded kinda’ crazy, but we just decided that we were not going to allow the airplanes to take off and attack Africa. No way. That was not gonna’ happen. Naw, no way.”**

**“How do you mean, what did you do?”**

**“Some men refused to arm the A3-J Vigilantes, the bombers, and other brothers would not let the F-14’s take off. When the F-14’s couldn’t fly, the missions were aborted, because the Vigilante bombers were going nowhere without a fighter escort. The Navy felt that a fighter escort was needed because Uganda had an Air Force that the CIA had assessed to be a credible threat capable of shooting down attacking airplanes. Uganda had at least one squadron of Soviet MIG-23 fighters that was well-trained and on alert. They had been trained by the Cubans and the Romanians. In fact, the story was two of the instructors were women who were fighter aces from the air wars in Southern Africa against the White jackasses from Pretoria.”**

**“I had never heard of this incident. I am amazed. None of this was in the newspaper.”**

**“Yeah, nothing was in the newspaper, even though knife fights broke out on the ship and some people were stabbed and injured pretty badly.”**

**For a few seconds I sat in contemplation about what I had just been told. “Are people being court-martialed?”**

**“No. It seems that the Navy has tried to keep this whole thing under wraps. Many of the Black sailors have been reassigned to other ships. But everybody is nervous about it.”**

**“I can see why people would be nervous. What you have told me amounts to a mutiny, maybe even treason. You all were very brave to act upon your convictions.” I stood up from my chair, Dawson was seated on the far side of my desk. I extended my right hand and said “I want to commend you for your act of valor and sense of purpose. I would be proud to shake your hand.” We shook hands and I told him “If there ever is any legal action brought against you or any of the others, contact me. It would be a privilege to act as your defense counsel.”**

**Dawson smiled, and for the first time he looked relieved of a burden. Soon afterwards, he left my office.**

**I sat for a few minutes and thought about what I had been told. For a while the images simmered in my head, and then I became angry. “So, this is Jimmy Carter’s idea of good relations with the Africans? For a second time I heard something about the Carter administration that sickened me. A few months earlier, one of my White neighbors, who was a member of a C-141 flight crew, told me that his aircraft the week before had delivered military supplies to the apartheid regime in South Africa. The public position of the Carter administration was that the United States was not providing any military assistance to the racist regime in Pretoria, South Africa. Apparently, the public position of the United States of America regarding its opposition to the apartheid regime was a lie.**

**Camilla and I had spoken by telephone during the day, and for whatever reason I had decided to stay at the BOQ that evening. It was a Friday night. It had been almost two weeks since I had spent the night at my own home. I figured this would be a good time to catch up on the laundry and maybe even dust and vacuum.**

**Christmas was not far away, and plans were already in place to get together with relatives in Detroit. There was also another date marked on the calendar, an important date. Camilla and I had tickets to an Earth Wind and Fire concert in Los Angeles in a couple of weeks.**

**It felt a little strange to be home after spending so much time with Camilla, her sister, and the little guy. I enjoyed the quietness of my home, but I also missed the chatter of having others around. I looked inside the kitchen and thought “That is definitely a Walter Lewis refrigerator. Nothing in it but a big bottle of cold water and a huge bag of potato chips. The potato chips are half-eaten and held shut by a rubber band.” I scolded myself, at some point I really needed to acquire a fondness for cooking, so that I would have some food in my house, rather than always eating out. But that was not to be today, and I went out for pizza and soda.**

**I was still haunted by the Uganda story. It was not surprising that there was nothing in the news media about the incident. I remembered back to 1965 when Father and his airplane were stationed in Southeast Asia. I knew that the United States was using the B-52 bomber on a regular basis to attack targets related to the Vietnam War. However, in the news media, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird on repeated occasions claimed there were no B- 52 bombers in Southeast Asia. That was a lie from the highest levels of the U.S. government.**

**Monday morning came too quickly, a sentiment that was probably shared by millions across the United States after the Thanksgiving weekend. I do not recall exactly what happened over the next several days. My conduct was abrasive and what I had feared for more than a year came to pass. I was being watched closely by those around me for any signs of inappropriate behavior. There must’ve been several incidents that triggered my commander’s decision to take me to my psychiatrist’s office at the March hospital.**

**There was more than one occasion when I told people in the legal office that I feared that people were trying to kill me, citing my car’s brake failure. And I told a few people about being fired at with a sniper’s rifle. But I did not tell anyone what happened to the bullet. I’m sure that any description of what happened to that bullet would have sounded as crazy as a giraffe wearing a top hat, so I told no one about what had appeared to be a force field shielding me during the shooting incident.**

**There was also something else that was going completely unnoticed by me. One evening Camilla and I went to a restaurant for dinner. When we left the restaurant, I asked her to put her hand on my heart. Jokingly, I said “I can control my heartbeat. Feel here. I’m going to make it stop and start again.” Camilla placed her hand on my chest and exclaimed “How are you doing that?” She could feel that my heart rhythms were starting and stopping. Both of us failed to perceive the extreme danger that we observed. I was losing control of my heartbeat because I had ingested a sympathomimetic amine. In 1977, I had no perception of the factors that were causing my irregular heartbeat.**

**In 1994, when this situation came up for review, it was suspected that I had taken some form of decongestant cough medicine at that time, treating a stuffy nose and other hay fever symptoms. By 1994, I was uncertain as to whether I was suffering from hay fever at that time, but that was understandable, since whether a person had a stuffy nose on a certain date 17 years earlier would in most likelihood not be a very memorable item of information. However, by 2017, the more realistic suspicion turned to the following: A sympathomimetic chemical had been placed in the cold-water bottle in my refrigerator. I was an easy target for such a plan because the water bottle and potato chips were the only consumables in my apartment. Any evil plotter would easily realize that over several days I would drink all the water and thereby consume whatever dosage of the drug was in the bottle.**

**So, there we were, it was the week after Thanksgiving and my commanding officer was in his car driving me to see my psychiatrist at the March air base hospital. I wasn’t happy about being taken there, but I foolishly thought that I could convince the doctor that nothing was wrong with me, and I would be heading right back home.**

**Doctor Young questioned me in his office. That interview did not go well for me, because Young said that it was going to be necessary to admit me to the hospital immediately.**

**“No, I don’t want that. There’s no reason to do that,” I protested, saying that I would not stay. My offer in compromise was that I would come back tomorrow, but I would not stay. The decision was not to be left in my hands. The doctor opened the door to his office, and I could see there were three large men in white nurses’ uniforms who were there to physically carry me, if necessary, up to the mental health unit.**

**I was by that time extremely paranoid, and I decided that I would run away rather than be admitted to the hospital. Young’s office was on the ground floor and had a huge picture window on the wall opposite the door. In retrospect, my plan was ridiculous. I planned to crash through the window and then run away. I really hadn’t thought through that plan, as things turned out.**

**I stood for a few seconds in the middle of the room, pleading my case to remain a free man. That was getting me nowhere. Suddenly, I ran towards the window and then dove head-first into the glass. The window shattered into 100 pieces as I crashed through the glass and tumbled onto the grass outside. In fact, I had not hit the glass with my head, at the instant of impact I punched the glass with both fists – Tae Kwan Do style – and the picture window shattered, just as I had planned. To the extent that I had a plan, that is what I had planned to do.**

**If the situation had not been so paranoid and serious, my next realization would have been completely laughable – truly sitcom quality. As I jumped to my feet, I looked around for the best direction to run. “Oh my God,” I exclaimed, “this is a completely enclosed courtyard. There is no way out, other than a doorway that led back to the hospital’s main lobby.” And at that moment, the three burly orderlies were running into the courtyard through that doorway. I said to myself, “Nice going, Walter. This has been an absolutely fabulous plan of escape.” Plus, there was no long-term escape. Escape to where?**

**The three orderlies approached me immediately, but very cautiously. You could see in their body language that they feared a physical confrontation. But that was not going to happen, because I sensed no real hostility from them. And I would not hurt anyone when there was no reason to do so. I lowered my arms to my side and allowed them to grab both arms. One of the men said “Take him to the emergency room. He’s got to be hurt after that. God, look at all the broken glass.” Two of the men had firm grips on my arms as they shuffled me hurriedly to the hospital’s emergency room.**

**The doctors in the emergency room quickly evaluated me. I’m sure everyone in the hospital heard the boom as I crashed through the window, so there was a good deal of excitement as the doctors and nurses looked me over for cuts and injuries. I had a small cut on my right wrist and a few superficial cuts on the back of my left hand. One doctor said, as he looked at my wrist, “That’s going to require a couple of stitches.” He signaled to a nurse, “Get ready for sutures.” I was lying on my side on a gurney, and almost immediately I felt a stinging pain in my butt. They had just given me a shot of some sort of knockout drug. I felt drowsy almost immediately, although I was aware that my right wrist was being worked on; a doctor was closing the cut with stitches. After a minute or two, I became drowsier and then everything went black. I passed out at around sundown.**

**Hours passed during the time that I was unconscious. It was the next morning when I woke up. I was lying on a bed in a private room in the mental health ward. When I came to, I tried to lift my arms. That was impossible, because both arms and legs were clamped down to the bed by restraints.**

**From the doorway, I heard a woman’s voice say “He’s awake. He’s awake. Come quick.”**

**A few seconds later, Mr. Greene walked through the door. He had a smile on his face as he came to my bedside. “Well, Captain Lewis, how are you feeling?”**

**I was groggy for a few seconds, as I looked at him before answering “Actually, I feel pretty good,” I said calmly, “Except my butt hurts a little from that hypodermic needle you guys stuck in me. Other than that, I feel okay.”**

**“Are these necessary?” I shook my arms against the leather restraints holding me to the hospital bed.**

**Mr. Greene was smiling, and he paused for a few seconds before he spoke. “You tell me. People here are afraid. Everybody knows you’re a Karate expert. If we take away the restraints, are you going to jump up and go Kung Fu’ing down the hallway?”**

**“No, nothing like that’s going to happen. When’s breakfast? I’m starving.”**

**Two additional medical people entered the room as Mr. Greene and I spoke. Mr. Greene looked at me for a few more seconds, and then signaled to one of the two male nurses “Remove the restraints.” The orderly turned to Mr. Greene and appeared apprehensive, but he followed instructions and released the restraints from my arms and legs that bound me to the bed.**

**“Captain Lewis, I just took a huge chance with you in large part because I remember the first time you were here – last year. Last night you acted like a madman. You dove headfirst through a plate glass window. But I can take one look at you now and listen to your voice. You are showing no signs of mania just 10 hours later. That same thing happened the first time you were here a year ago. That’s amazing. Breakfast is in about 30 minutes, but first, we need to get you squared away with the standard admission blood tests. Come out into the common area. Nurse, send word down to the lab. We need a blood draw technician ASAP.”**

**And that was it. I went back into the mental health clinic. I found out later that morning that many of the medical people at the clinic were absolutely convinced that I was putting on an act to get out of the Air Force with medical disability payments. Their theory was no one goes from acute mania to normal over the course of a night. However, as Mr. Greene pointed out, that happened both times when I was admitted to the hospital.**

**A week or two later, I formally requested a medical separation from the Air Force, and my request was granted after two months of administrative processing. I was to receive a substantial, tax-free disability payment for the rest of my life – at least for the indefinite future.**

**I was still able to see Earth, Wind and Fire at their concert in Los Angeles. Technically, I was on a 24-hour pass from the mental health clinic. I went to Detroit at Christmas time on a 72-hour pass from the mental health clinic.**

**Technically, I never went back to work, and I was a patient at the mental health unit up until my retirement from the Air Force at the end of February 1978. Over those weeks, I received a series of 24-hour passes. While on one of those passes, I spent the day babysitting Freddie because Natalie had to go to job interviews. I will never forget the confidence in me that Natalie expressed “I have been around you for months. I don’t think there’s anything wrong with you.” In retrospect, I think hearing her say those words went a long way towards building the confidence that my future life was not going to be filled with psychiatrists and pills. Although, in retrospect, it is somewhat laughable. Natalie was leaving her three-year-old child in the care of a mental patient on a 24-hour pass from a mental hospital. I am sure Oprah Winfrey would say that was not an advisable course of action for a single mom to take.**

**In early February I got a call from the manager at my storage facility. He said, “Your unit has been broken into. You should come by as soon as possible and take a look.”**

**The burglar had broken into the storage unit behind mine and then cut through the wall into my unit. There really was not much value in my storage unit. Most of what was there was just boxes of books and papers. Undoubtedly the only item of any significant value was my Smith and Wesson revolver. I expected that the gun would be stolen when I looked at the scene in my storage unit. Every box had been opened and all the papers were scattered on the floor. To my surprise, the gun had not been taken; the box it was in had been opened, but the gun was left behind.**

**A shudder went down my spine. After an hour of putting paper documents back into file boxes I realized only one thing had been taken. I had a file of papers on the Dosek heroin cartel case. That file had an unrelated name on it, to hide its contents. That file was gone. It was the only thing taken by the burglar, assuming there was just one burglar. When I realized the heroin cartel file was gone, and I also took into consideration the fact that the thieves had not bothered to take a perfectly operable handgun, I focused on another anomaly. The thieves had broken into the unit behind mine and cut a hole through the wall to enter my unit. How clever I thought. My unit’s door was exposed to the street; my neighbor’s door faced the interior of the storage complex and was shielded from view. A passerby or the manager would have been far more likely to see someone break into my unit’s door. The thief figured it would be safer to break into the door of my neighbor and then cut through the thin dividing wall. That was smart – far smarter than the average criminal. Over the years, I have become more attuned to the level of intellect and caution displayed by the Group. They seldom get caught when doing the things that they do.**

**Camilla and I had a lot of fun in my last few months in Southern California. I loved her and will always love her, as well as Natalie and Freddie. They helped me in ways that are immeasurable. But it was so soon after my divorce, I really could not even think about a long-term relationship. Plus, Camilla was in the Air Force, so she couldn’t just quit and move to New York City. I knew that, and I would never even ask her to do such a rash thing. Nor would I ask her for a long-distance relationship. Those things never work.**

**I left California in May 1978. Camilla and I said goodbye in the parking lot of her apartment complex. “I’ll see you later. I don’t know when, but I’ll see you again,” were my parting words to her. She cried as I embraced her. I did not let Camilla see me cry. I waited until I was about a mile away, then I pulled to the side of the road where no one could see me. I cried for a good long time. I sobbed for a whole host of saddening reasons and circumstances, including the possible damage to my career and self-esteem from all the calamities that happened in California.** .

**That was the end of the four-year Air Force detour during my life. It was comforting to know that I was heading back to New York. I was in one piece. Despite all, I was basically optimistic about the future. Thank God, I had a great job to which I could return.**

**At the very least, I figured I learned valuable lessons. For example: Do not marry a stranger; get to know a woman for better than four months before you make her a permanent part of your life. Ten years would pass before I would marry again in 1988, but I cannot say that I made a better choice the second time around.**

**My second wife is Genevieve Randolph. She had two young sons from her first marriage; she was a 29-year-old widow. Six months passed between our introduction and our wedding day, so that was an improvement by 50% over the courtship of my first wife Linda. But I again married a stranger. I had no idea regarding the extent of deceit that shrouded Genevieve’s professional life and made her a very easy blackmail target.**

**A person and person posing for a picture

Description automatically generated**

**In 1989, Genevieve was a special education teacher at the elementary school level in New York City. However, she had never completed the coursework needed to qualify for that position. She had a counterfeit certificate of completion, from New York’s Mercy College, that she used to deceive the New York and California school districts that hired her. She first told me of her fraud eight months after our wedding in a telephone call that was probably monitored by the Group. The Group took advantage of the extremely compromising information and blackmailed Genevieve, securing her full cooperation for the next several years as she tried repeatedly to torpedo my life with a series of false allegations. I can imagine the Group telling Genevieve when to jump, and on the way up, Genevieve would yell out, “How high?”**

**When Genevieve told me that she had not completed the course work required for her job, I was alarmed and told her, “How can you be so calm about this? If I had never finished law school and was working as a lawyer, I would get nervous every time the telephone rang.” In 1989, Genevieve said, “Don’t worry. I won’t get caught. They don’t check anything. Don’t worry.” She was right. She has worked for years for school systems in the San Francisco Bay Area. She was the principal at an elementary school on the San Francisco Peninsula and in the Eastbay. Below is one of Genevieve’s campaign advertisements for an election in the San Francisco Eastbay.**

# A person smiling for a photo Description automatically generated with low confidence

# Genevieve Randolph

## My second wife, Genevieve Randolph, retired Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources and Trustee, Chabot-Las Positas School District, Union City, California

**Apparently, she has discovered a solution to the high cost of advanced education: Namely, just claim you went to school, but don’t complete the necessary courses. That is much less expensive and less time-consuming.**

**I suspect that the Group extorted Genevieve’s complete cooperation with the drug cartel’s efforts to ruin my life in the early 1990s. Fortunately, our marriage was very short, and there was only one negative incident before I decided to distance myself from her. In January 1990, I was arrested for reckless driving. It was cypress tree hay fever season for me, and I was taking medicine containing pseudoephedrine for my nasal congestion; this was before I became aware of my allergy to this drug.**

**Late at night on the Monday after the Super Bowl, a police car tried to pull me over for driving 45 in a 35-mph zone in the suburban-countryside in the Eastbay of San Francisco. For several weeks prior to this, I was speaking with “The Crimes of Patriots” author Jonathan Kwitny regarding the smuggling operation at Norton air base in the 1970s. Consequently, I was hypersensitive to the possibility that the Group might attempt to block my efforts. When the cop car lit its blue and red lights and sounded its siren, I panicked because I foolishly concluded that the driver of the “cop car” was an imposter who was attempting to stop me in the middle of nowhere. So I sped away and a 20-minute high-speed chase ensued, with speeds reaching 105 mph. Several times during the chase, the speed was only 25 mph, as I searched for a place that was well-lit, and people were present. Eventually, several additional police cars joined the pursuit.**

**The pursuit came to an end in an upscale suburban town when the windshield of my car fogged over, and I skidded my Acura Legend into a ditch. My car was surrounded by police who ripped me from the car, threw me to the pavement, and beat me Rodney King-style while laughing and whooping gleefully. The police claimed that I resisted arrest, but the police allegation was an abject lie. I suffered a severe concussion and a facial bone – my zygomatic arch – was crushed; this required emergency surgery to successfully correct the fracture. Months later, I pleaded guilty to reckless driving.**

**The reckless driving incident had a huge silver lining. I was arrested on the spot and intoxication was suspected, so a blood sample was drawn that night. There was no involvement of illegal drugs or alcohol, but the blood samples drawn revealed that I had been exposed to some form of poison that had affected my liver function, resulting in a creatine phosphokinase level that was dangerously off the charts. Several years would pass before the culprit was finally verified by a distinguished doctor at the San Francisco Veterans Administration hospital. It was here that the discovery of my acutely toxic allergy to sympathomimetic amines was discovered.**

**There were incidents created by Genevieve that were designed to slander my reputation. In 1991, Genevieve claimed that I threatened to kill her in an affidavit she filed for a protective order. I never made any such threat, but she claimed that I had threatened her in a telephone call between us in March 1991.**

**When Genevieve filed her affidavit with the Superior Court in Oakland, she did not know that the San Leandro police department was monitoring the phone call as it happened. The San Leandro City police were monitoring my phone line because the police had discovered that someone was listening to my phone calls with an illegal wiretap. The telephone conversation in which Genevieve claimed I had threatened to kill her was recorded. The recording exposed that Genevieve was lying, and her affidavit seeking a protective order against me was perjury – a felony. Plus, the police determined that Genevieve was the person operating the illegal wiretap on my home phone – a misdemeanor under California law. I asked the police not to prosecute Genevieve for the sake of her two minor children. Without their mother’s paycheck, the two little boys, who were formerly my stepsons, would have no means of adequate financial support.**

**A detective from the San Leandro police department reached me in the afternoon during March 1991. He said, “Mr. Lewis our investigation has determined that the illegal wiretap on your home phone is coming from your wife’s telephone at her place of employment, Arundel Elementary School on the San Francisco Peninsula. There is no doubt about it. She deserves to be prosecuted.” I paused for a few seconds to take in the information before I spoke. “I don’t want to press charges. If her school finds out that she was committing a misdemeanor on premises she will get fired and her career will be ruined. I don’t want to prosecute. I suspect that my ex-wife is being blackmailed.”**

**“What?” The detective was all ears, “Blackmailed by who?”**

**I answered, “By a drug cartel embedded within America’s military.” I spoke for a few minutes and the detective was silent and seemed to listen. He said, “So, the bottom line is you don’t want to press charges? That’s annoying. The department went through a lot of difficulty and technology to catch her doing this weird thing.”**

**I did not tell the police about Genevieve’s phony academic credentials. Each time she cashed her paycheck she committed grand larceny by trick on the California schools. She committed a felony every two weeks – each payday.**

**Two years later, Genevieve tried for a second time to frame me, once again alleging that I had made vicious threats to her in a series of telephone calls. For a second time, she failed to deliver a victory for the Group, because no such threats had been made. And that reality was provable because at the time of the alleged threats I was vacationing in Tahiti, and I made no phone calls from Tahiti to my ex-wife’s telephones in California. The Tahitian telephone company was very cooperative and confirmed the fact that no one in Tahiti telephoned Genevieve’s home number or her telephone number at work during my time in the South Pacific.**

**+-A person standing in front of a store

Description automatically generated**

**August 27, 2022, in Santee, California**

**First purchaser of the e-book “Destiny – A Legend of Our Time” ™**

**This concludes Volume Two of “Destiny – A Legend of Our Time” ™**

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