

1963



A TRUE ZINE STORY
by Randall Colley c 2023



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HARRY AND ANNA MILLER ALONG
WITH THE FLORIDA ELKS TRUST FUND
CREATED THE HARRY ANNA CRIPPLED
CHILDRENS HOME IN UMATILLA
FLORIDA IN 1951

September 02, 1963 was the start of the first day of the sixth grade for my friends and classmates, but not for me.

I was at the Orlando Hospital where the doctors were chipping away at the bones in my left foot in order to lower my arch.

When they finished I had a fused ankle and 5 staples holding the bone together, that I still have today.

My little league coach told my parents that there was something wrong with my feet, he could tell by the way I ran.

They took me to see a doctor on a Thursday and they operated on my left foot the next Monday, I was 11 years old.

A few days after the operation I went to Harry Anna Crippled Children's Home in Umatilla Florida.

The Home was named after Harry and Anna Miller who with the Florida Elks Trust Fund opened a Home for crippled children in 1951.

Harry Anna was an old building that resembled the Alamo from the outside.

The boys were housed in one end of the building and the girls were in the other.

I arrived just after noon and most of the boys in the ward were taking an afternoon nap.

It was still summer and very hot with no air conditioning there were big fans in every corner of the huge room.

There were probably 30 young boys in the ward. It was a quiet time with only the nurses talking.

I was terrified and my foot hurt really bad.

We could only see our parents on Sundays from 1pm to 4pm and they were very strict about the visiting policy.

All of the beds had bed rails.

I remember the sound of the big fans humming and blowing warm air across my bed, the sound was deafening in the otherwise quiet ward of napping boys.

The kid in the bed next to mine was a teenager, his leg was in a cast all the way to his hip.

He had been there awhile.

He scared me when he pulled himself up and stood on his good leg and was dancing the twist in the middle of his bed.

The nurse yelled, "Tommy lay down in that bed right now".

I knew he was going to be a mischievous character; he made me laugh.

I heard a boy yell out in a sleepy voice, "urinal, urinal" I had no idea what that meant.

Then the nurse took a metal pitcher to his bed. Then another boy yelled out "urinal".

The boys were bed bound and just waking up from their naps and they all had to go to the bathroom.

The nurses were hurrying to bring them urinals or a bedpan if that was what they needed.

Some boys had wheelchairs and crutches next to their beds so they could get in and out of bed on their own and go to the bathroom without assistance.

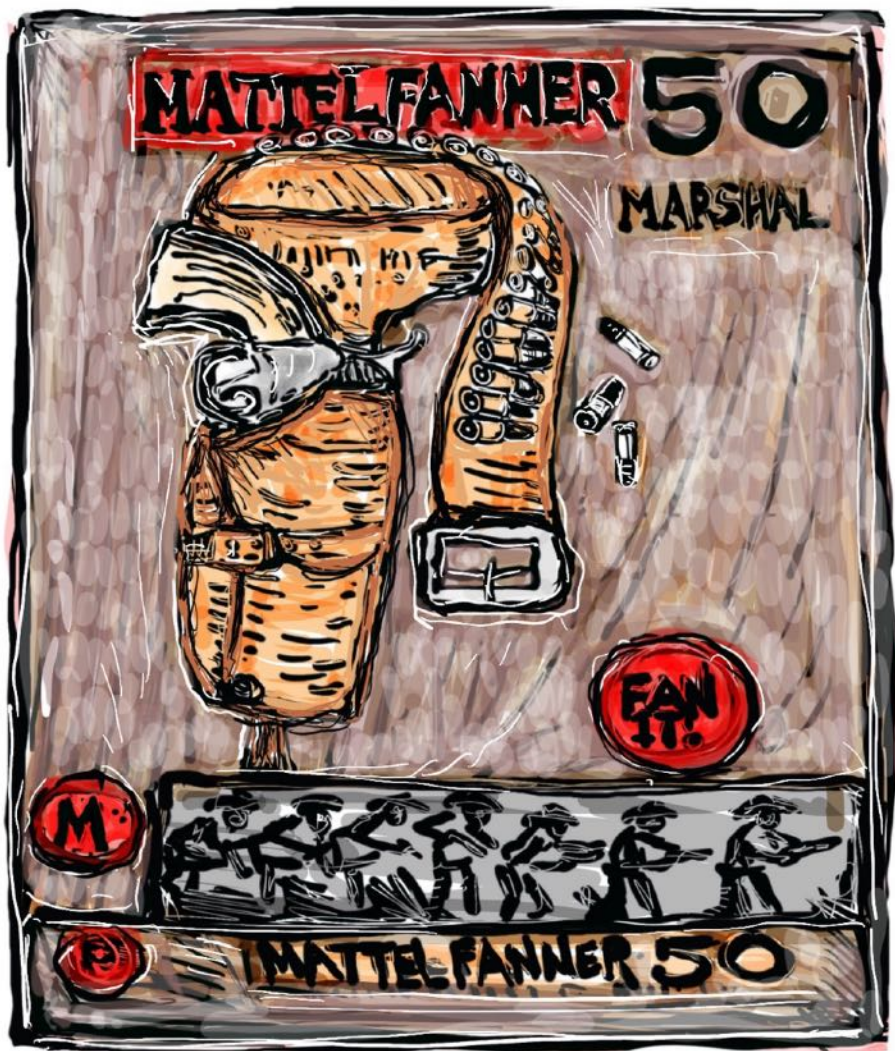
Right now I needed a 'urinal' I could not get out of the bed on my own.

My left foot was operated on first and my right foot was to done later. I would be there for the next 4 months.

Saturday was bingo day. They had all kinds of prizes on a table that the children could win.

I saw a Fanner Fifty cap gun and holster. I really wanted that prize.

I had never played bingo, but guess what, I won and they gave me a real Mattel Fanner Fifty cap gun and holster.



MATTEL
FANNER 50
CAP PISTOL ®

What I did not realize at the time was that the nurses made sure every child won a prize.

Harry Anna was a hospital for children who were crippled with every kind of medical problem imaginable.

Derick who was 14, had a bone disease in his hip.

He been there for over a year and he was in a full plaster body cast that went up to his chest.

There were several boys in full body casts with hip problems. Some would require multiple surgeries.

A clean white cast always meant a recent surgery.

One boy was severally pigeon toed and had his feet in brace that turned his feet outward. It was very painful he cried all the time.

One boy was having his leg lengthened. It was a painful process.

Harry Anna was for children under the age of eighteen. However, three of the children had turned eighteen.

Bobby was now 18 years old. He was a high school football quarterback who was in a car accident that left him with severe brain trauma.

He did not have the coordination to even feed himself and he was total care.

His father came every Sunday and read to him from the dictionary hoping to help his son recover his mental capacity.

Bobby was very volatile and quick to anger and was prone to colorful verbal outbursts.

The boys would tease him until he exploded in a rage, he would shake his fist and curse at them with words that I had never heard before.

The boys would run away in their wheelchairs laughing at him which would only make him angrier.

The nurses would yell at the boys, because now they would have to calm Bobby down. Boys can be cruel.

John had also turned 18 he had been there since he was 14 years old.

He said when he was 12 years old, he was showing off in front of his girlfriend when he did a backflip off a picnic table at the park and broke his neck.

He had been paralyzed since that day.

He was a paraplegic that meant his legs were paralyzed, but he had some arm movement.

The nurses would put an ink pen in a rolled up ace bandage and tape it to his hand so he could write letters on a lap board.

He had written letters to the faith healer, Oral Roberts, hoping he could heal him. He had beautiful hand writing.

Billy was another quadriplegic that had turned 18. I never interacted with him, he had hair like Elvis Presley.

The nurses would spend time with him, they had to feed him and brush his teeth, they made sure his hair was always combed.

They tried to keep his spirits up.

The the school board sent teachers to the hospital for every child no matter what grade we were in, so that when we returned home we would not be behind in our school work.

My teacher taught First through the Six grade all in the same room.

I was the only kid in the sixth grade there was a girl in 5th grade and some younger kids, they had a lot of issues.

Many of kids were teenagers in high school, they had classes in a big room near the dining hall.

I went past their classroom once and looked in; they were very loud and unruly.

Jimmy was the orderly and he would push us in our hospital beds down the hall to our classroom, everyday from 8am to 12pm, 5 days a week.

It was always a big deal when a new kid would come.

Once a new kid came that had been walking with crutches most of his life, he could walk just using his crutches and never let his feet touch the floor.

Then the new kid came with his own wheelchair.

His chair was newer and had the small wheels in front. He could pop a wheelie and ride down the hallway with the front wheels up in the air.

The rest of us had the ancient wooden wheelchairs with the small wheels in the back.

He was the coolest kid in the hospital and we were jealous because he could impress the girls.



Being 11 years old and away from your family was hard, but there were good days to remember.

Friday dinner was pork chop night. Mondays we always had pancakes and bacon for breakfast.

Saturday was our favorite day of the week. Saturday dinner was always scrambled eggs and french fries and I could put as much catsup on my eggs as I wanted, my mother would not let me put catsup on my eggs at home.

But most important, it was Creature Feature Movie night. Boris Karloff and the Mummy, the Creature from the Black Lagoon, Dracula, The Fly, Godzilla and a host of corny movies on a black and white television that were made just to scare young boys.

After dinner, the nurses would line up all of the bed bound boys in the hallway then push their beds into the lobby to watch television.

We would tease them as we wheeled by in our wheelchairs. Did I say boys can be cruel.

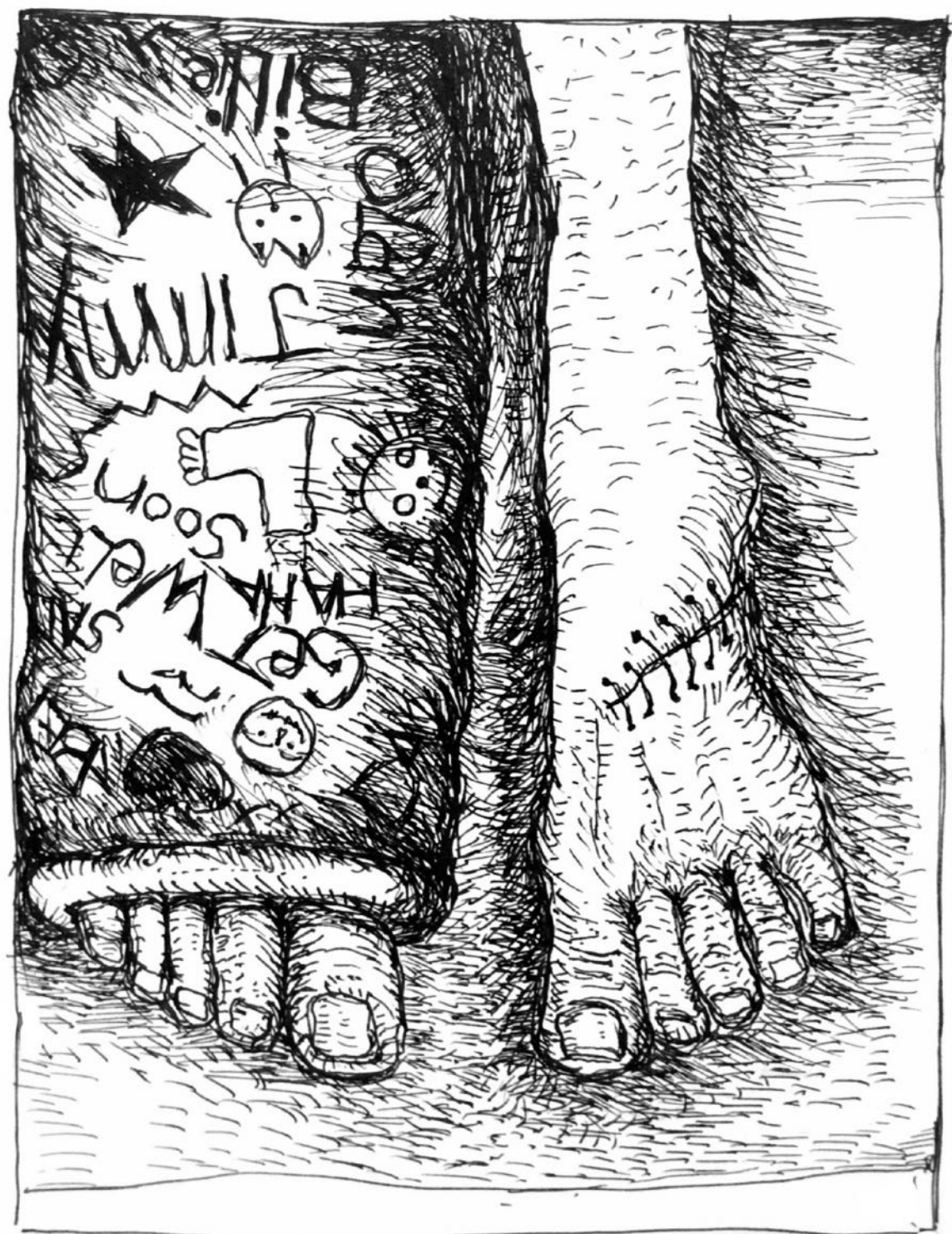
This is what my left foot looked like when they took off the cast. One month later, they operated on my right foot.

Lots of people signed their names on my casts and drew stupid pictures.

It would be a another month before they would take the cast off my right foot.

My left foot had atrophied and was horrifying to look at. On visiting day, I unwrapped the cast and it made my mother cry.

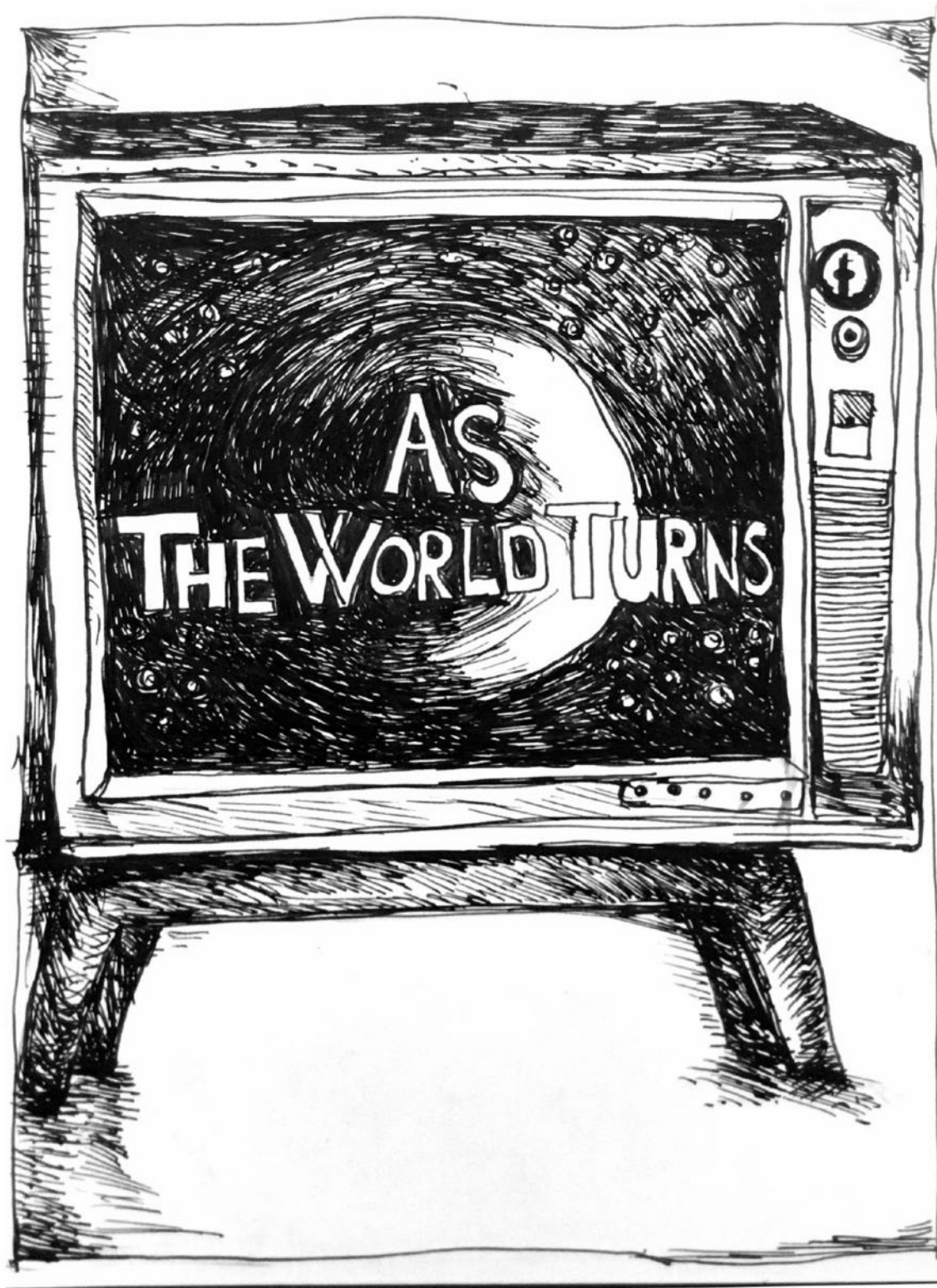
My left foot was too weak to walk on and my right foot was now in a cast. I could still use a wheelchair, but it was a lot more difficult.



On November 22, 1963, I was wheeling my wheelchair through the lobby on the way to the dining room to make sure it was pork chop day.

There was no one in the lobby, the nurses would leave the TV on during the day so they could catch a glimpse of their Soap Operas when they walked by. The TV show As the World Turns was on.

As I was going by the network interrupted the TV program to announce that President Kennedy had been shot. The CBS newsman Walter Cronkite, he was the most trusted man in America.



CBS NEWS
CBS NEWS
CBS NEWS
CBS NEWS
CBS NEWS
CBS NEWS
CBS NEWS
CBS NEWS
BULLETIN





This is President John Kennedy.



This is CBS newsman Walter Cronkite, he was the most trusted man in America.



I wheeled back to the nurses station as fast as I could and told the nurses that president Kennedy had been shot.

They told me that, I was lying, and for me to leave the nurses station, they were too busy for my foolishness.

I convinced one of the nurses to go with me to the lobby and she would see I was telling the truth.

She started crying. She ran back to the nurses station and all of the nurses came to the television set and they all started crying.

I was too young to grasp the full meaning of that moment in history.

This is how all of the nurses acted when they saw the news report.



The doctors took the cast off my right foot two weeks before Christmas and put one on with a rubber walker so I could learn to walk again.

I begged and cried so much the week before Christmas, that the doctors finally gave in and let me go home 12/23/1963, 2 days before Christmas.

My right foot was not ready for discharge, but I promised I would use the crutches and not put any my weight on my foot.

But the real point of this story is about fate.

One day a young college kid came to visit our ward.

Volunteers would often come to the hospital and walk around the ward giving out candy and stuffed toys to try to cheer us up.

But this young guy had a handful of pencils and a stack of paper on a clipboard.

He walked around sketching small drawings of the boys.

He made a simple pencil drawing of the boys that would sit still long enough for him to sketch their profile.

I had never seen anyone that could look at a person and make a drawing of them.

That moment changed my life forever.

I knew in that moment what I wanted to do in life.

I followed him around and watched him make the drawings, before he left he gave me his clipboard with the paper and pencils.

I got the nurse to let me call my mother to see if she could buy me a drawing book for the next Sunday visiting day, she did.

My first real drawing was a perspective drawing from the book.

It was a road with disappearing telephone poles. It was so exciting to be able to draw that.

The amazing part is that 20 years later, I found myself working at a Florida attraction drawing portraits of tourists.

This story and these drawings came from that day in my life 60 years ago.

You never know how one kind person giving away their talent can change another person's entire life.

I grew up to be a 6'5" 220 pound artist and not a football player.

That was a disappointment to my father, but not to me.

1963 was a very hard year, but the hand of fate made it one of the best years of my life.

The End

MAKE A POEM
WRITE A STORY
MAKE A DRAWING
MAKE A ZINE
EVERYDAY

