

Whisperingsparks©

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to all those who have been wounded through abuse, war and life; to those who have been brave enough to continue to find the positive in the dark night of the soul; to those whose hearts and dreams have been crushed, who dared to choose to be a victor and live and not a victim giving up; to my family who have shown me that life is to be lived, not hidden from; to dear friends who have stood the test of time, and to all those amazing first responders, veterans and their families I have met and fallen in love with along the way, who were all brave enough to show me their hearts, their wounds, their journeys, and their hopes. I dedicate this book to all those who dared to question “where is God when bad things happen” and are willing to see beyond their pain, loss, betrayal, and mortality to examine the truth. You have all shown me what honor, courage, perseverance and character are all about. You have made my life so rich and I could not imagine walking this journey without you. Above all, I dedicate this book to my best friend Yeshua HaMashiac.

Prologue

All my life I have heard it said, and I believe it and repeat it, “examine history and learn from it; if you do not, history will repeat itself.” I am sharing my story for both us; for you, hoping my history and the tidbits of hope along the way might save you from pain, or help you through yours. For me, much healing comes as I share my story in hopes that by doing so might also bring you, the reader, hope, understanding and healing.

We all walk through various tests and trials in this life, some are minor, others firestorms with complete destruction. There is nothing on earth like a shattered heart with missing pieces, a fractured mind, a hard-darkened soul or a broken body. These are all the results of betrayal, confusion and lies from others or ourselves, unforgiveness and bitterness that carry deep roots of destruction and life’s traumas. Often, in our very busy and fractured lives, it is the small things that open our eyes bringing us joy in the midst of sorrow, and hope when there seems no way out.

I will try my best to honestly share my story with all its vulnerabilities, not for sympathy or a rallying cry, but that you might also see through my eyes and my imperfect history, the reason for my hope, and the whispering sparks of it along the way. Enjoy the read. Please feel free to yell, scream, cry, shake your head and laugh, it is after all a journey we all get to share.

Chapter 1

In the Beginning

If there had been three fairy godmothers present at the birthing of this infant, like at the arrival of Sleeping Beauty, there might have been some warning of the challenging tidings soon to appear on the scene. Alas, this was not the case. The sleepy little town of Grand Prairie, Texas could never anticipate what the area surrounding it was about to go through. Jack and Donna Marie were doing their very best to prepare their small home for my arrival.

Both my parents had served in the military during World War II, my daddy did two enlistments in the US Army, momma was a wave in the US Navy and was the executive support for one of the rear Admirals in the pacific fleet. Following their time in the service, both had gotten married and divorced. Momma said neither of them planned on my birth and they were not very happy about it, as it had put a hitch in their plans.

My daddy, Jack, was the black sheep in the family, not following the example of his second cousins in North Carolina, who were evangelical in nature. He divorced his wife and left his children in North Carolina and traveled west towards Las Vegas. He met my mother in Las Vegas, and they started dating. My parents decided to do the “right” thing and were married in December 1956, so that I would not be born out of wedlock.

In January 1957, at 6 months pregnant, my momma and my brothers moved from California to Grand Prairie, Texas. Daddy had moved to Grand Prairie a month earlier, after securing a better paying job at International Telephone and Telegraph in Dallas, Texas. Momma said neither of them liked Texas, as it was so very cold in the winter, and they hated the spring storms. Momma stayed at home taking care of the family. I had two older brothers, Tommie and Ricky. Tommie was 7 and Ricky was 2. Tommie’s daddy was still alive and daddy adopted Ricky. My brothers were a

handful, as boys can be, and kept excitedly asking just when they would get to see the new baby, not knowing if I was a boy or girl.

Chapter 2

Where the Wind Blew

The day I was due, April 2nd, according to the doctor's office, ended up being one for the history books. Not many people can have that claim to fame. My mother, who was 39 weeks pregnant with me, fussed that day with her doctor's office on the phone about her due date. She insisted I should be born around the 10th of April by her calendar, her doctor insisted I should arrive sometime in the first days of April. His office had called momma the morning of April 2nd and set up an appointment for the next day, at his office in Dallas, by Parkland Hospital. He wanted her to come in and be checked for possible early admission for induction on April 3rd to Florence Nightingale Hospital in Dallas, Texas. Momma says she got off the phone and proceeded to clean the house and feed my brothers lunch. After the boys hands were washed, she sent them out to play in the backyard while she hung out the laundry to dry, since it was close to 70 degrees by one o'clock in the afternoon. Momma said the sky started to look strange, with dark heavy clouds starting to billow and bubble filling the sky. She said she had a bad feeling and called Daddy at work. He couldn't come home right then, he said, but would try to get off early, around 4 pm. He was concerned about her getting worried so close to her delivery date.

By 2 p.m., the skies had become black and angry as another storm was moving into the area, threatening to bring some good old-fashioned gully-washer storms. These were complete with thunder, lightning and clouds which heaved, while seemingly moving into circles and boiling like they were in a large witch's cauldron. The wind began to howl. Momma said that it started sounding more like a freight train, than a normal thunderstorm. Momma went outside and pulled the laundry from the line where it had been drying, as the large raindrops began to fall. Momma shared she kept looking over the fence towards the Dallas skyline from the backyard, hoping daddy would get home soon as the sky was looking very ugly. As 4 o'clock in the afternoon rolled around she watched in horror as multiple funnels descended down from a very large cloud

over Dallas, throwing what looked like tin and blue smoke up into the sky. Momma grabbed both my brothers as the storm shelter was 6 blocks away.

After what seemed an eternity, they all came out of the basement to lots of debris and downed trees in the neighborhood. Their street had been spared from the most destructive parts of the storm. The neighbor's house had a 20 year old tree sitting in their living room. There were lots of people hurt by the flying debris, but no lives lost from the storm on our street. Momma said Daddy arrived home well after midnight, having been trapped in one of the buildings downtown. Momma said she was so grateful everyone was ok, in spite of the horrific storm.

There was tremendous damage throughout Dallas and Oak Cliff, both suffering direct hits from the tornados and straight-line wind damage was evident throughout Grand Prairie. (Recently, the trail of damage was reviewed and one of the main tornadoes was determined to be at least an F3). Needless to say, momma and daddy did not make the doctor's office appointment on April 3rd as the destruction all around the Parkland Hospital and surrounding industrial area made it impossible to travel the roads safely. Momma found out later, that while the staff was safe, the office was severely damaged. Arrangements were made a week later for momma to be checked at Florence Nightingale Hospital at 11 p.m. on the 21st of April, where she was admitted and went into labor, delivering me 31 hrs. later on Tuesday, the 23rd. As usual, Momma got what she wanted. I arrived without momma being induced, even though I was two weeks late. The cause of the extended pregnancy, no one knows, whether it was her calendar, the storm damage or simply I wanted nothing to do with those horrible storms being anywhere around the time of my birth. I had no birth complications and momma shared for years that I must have a big angel watching over me...my life appears to have started with a little extra spark.

Shortly after my birth, my parents moved to Arizona, where there were no tornados or earthquakes. I think they forgot about the heat. I don't really remember it, but my little brother Mike was born just over a year later. Daddy worked in sales for a while in Arizona, but lost his job when the company went out of

business. Daddy changed jobs again and we all ended up moving back to California, where he got a job in Glendale, California. Momma found out she was pregnant and started seeing an OB doc in Hollywood, California. My parents put everything they owned into a storage container and tried their best to make a go of things. Daddy went on the road selling shoes, vacuums and whatever else he could to take care of his family. During this time, without enough money coming in, and too proud to ask for help, we moved from one place to another, never having enough money to pay the rent. My parents eventually ended up losing their storage container, which held all their earthly possessions..

Chapter 3

Bakersfield Bound

On a road trip from Los Angeles to Bakersfield Daddy was dealing with a lot of pressure, and was having lots of things that made him so very angry. On this particular road trip, the puppy we had was between us kids in the back seat was wanting to go to the bathroom. The puppy was fussy and kept whining. Daddy finally had enough of screaming at us to shut up the dog, and he reached around grabbed the puppy by the nape of the neck and threw him out the window around Lamont, California while we were driving around 60 mph. All us kids were crying and hollering and he told us if we didn't stop, we were next. My momma, newly pregnant and car sick was crying silently, and all us kids got quiet real quick. I saw my daddy start changing that day. I did not understand why daddy would do that, and I was heartbroken.

The next day we all ended in a very stinky area in Bakersfield, in a house on Gibson Street. We were out in the country and the rent was cheap, but it smelled of oil refineries and cow poop. For the next few months, I remember my parents arguing a lot, well more daddy yelling and screaming and throwing things. They would argue and he would get mad and drink, then apologize and get sick. I had no idea why he was so angry, and even at the young age of 3, somehow felt like it was my fault.

While Daddy was on business trips, my highlight of any day was going to see the donkey, Jax and her new baby. They belonged to the owner of our house, and we got money off rent for taking care of them. On one particular return from one of his business trips, Daddy was so sick and then got so angry, because he was so sick. I think he was angry at himself for allowing his sickness to cause such pain for his family. At least that is how I romanticized it. I went outside to see Jax so as not hear the screaming between my parents anymore. I remember walking behind Jax to pet the baby, when suddenly I felt a huge blow to my chest and I landed with

a thump clear across the pen. Yep, she had kicked me square in the chest, knocking the daylights out of me. I screamed so loud that Daddy came running and picked me up, rushing me into the house. They called the doctor who came to the house. I had a hoof print imbedded in the center of my chest and the edges were deep and bleeding. The Doctor wrapped my chest in bandages and I cried and cried. The doctor said it was a miracle I was not killed and was very surprised I had no broken bones. He told momma my angels were working overtime. Daddy started yelling at momma, who was pregnant, about not paying attention to where the kids were. My little brother was playing in the playpen. My older brother Tommie had gone back to his dad's and my brother Ricky had been grounded to his room for talking back to momma. It was a huge fight. I heard a lamp break as daddy threw it and then he turned around, yelled at me that I should have known better than walk behind a mule, and I better never do it again. I just started crying as he stormed out of the house. If only I had not walked behind Jax, they would not be fighting. I suddenly forgot I was only 3, taking on being responsible for their unhappiness. I knew I was not planned or wanted like my little brother or the new one on the way as every day I was reminded about the accident of my being there by momma. She would dress it up saying how lucky I had been born after the tornado and not before as I would probably have had different parents. I remember looking over and seeing the kindest person next to my bed, I thought the doctor had sent a nurse. I just remember how soft the clothes looked. Our clothes were lined dry and were always so stiff. I remember the pain suddenly was not as bad and I could catch my breath without hurting, so I stopped sobbing. I didn't remember falling asleep, but I must have for a little while later there was another person, really bright person, with kind eyes. I just remember feeling safe and closed my eyes. Momma came in later to check on me, and I asked her where the nurses had gone, she said there were not any at the house. Strange, I know I saw them, because I didn't hurt as bad when they were there. I asked my momma if she thought they were my guardian angels. She nodded and said perhaps, after the day you have had.

Funny, until now, I never realized how much I felt unwanted and that I shouldn't have been born. Yet, I kept seeing what I could only describe as angels that brought me comfort when I was so shattered in heart and

body. I felt like maybe someone did want me. Daddy came home from the bar early that evening and cleaned up. We all, including me were called to the table for supper, where we all sat and ate like nothing was wrong. The air was so heavy with everyone afraid to say a word.

During this time, Daddy finally landed a job with marketing for McDonnell Douglas. He would need to do a lot of traveling. When he returned the next week, he had brought small gifts for all of us children. For me, he did a little extra, bringing me a pink ironing board, broom and dustpan and a beautiful blond-haired dolly. He hugged me and said he was sorry. It is the kindest memory I have of my daddy, for at that time children were to be seen and not heard.

Chapter 4

A New Chapter

In June 1960, there were layoffs from daddy's work and he lost his job. Daddy applied for a job in Glendale, Ca with Prudential Life insurance Company. This job would mean lots more travel, but it would provide stability for his family. Daddy made a friend in Glendale, while applying for the job, who also lived in Bakersfield named Bob. Daddy got the job. He and Bob agreed to switch off driving back and forth so daddy could support his family and it would give Bob more time with his wife Dottie, and two sons, the older was Bob Jr. and the younger, Larry. That summer was particularly hot with the dust and bad air seeming to have a really bad effect on daddy. He was having horrible headaches all the time and had developed a really bad cough. Over the year he had lost a lot of weight and he was always angry or would say some of the oddest things, like mix words up. The doctor thought he had Valley Fever, a common San Joaquin Valley lung fungal infection and dismissed anything more serious. Daddy continued to work, but he was getting so tired and losing even more weight. My daddy knew that my little sister would be arriving soon, and that we needed a bigger house. My little sister Katherine was born on November 23, 1960, while we lived in the Gibson Street house.

The desire for cleaner less dusty surroundings continued to grow and one day momma and daddy went to look at another house across town on the eastside in the beginning of the summer of 1961. My parents were finally able to put in an offer on a house on the eastside of Bakersfield, a long way from the oily smell on Gibson Street. A month after signing the paperwork for the mortgage company for the title search for what they hoped would be their new home, Daddy left for what would end up being his last business trip.

A few days after daddy came home from his trip, he blacked out following a coughing fit, after a terrible argument with momma about the house they were going to buy. It was around July 1961, when daddy and momma went to sign the final papers on the house. I really thought the fighting would stop, because they got the house. It didn't. A week later daddy went to the doctor for his black out and the doctor referred him to the local hospital, as he could not figure out anything wrong, other than maybe the Valley Fever that my daddy had been fighting for two years. After many tests he was referred to the doctors at UCLA, who admitted him for testing. Daddy was angry he did not feel good, angry that no one would give him any answers. Momma shared that one day during testing, daddy's face went a little slack and the doctors thought he had a stroke at 45. More doctors were called in and extensive testing was done. My momma said he had lost the vision in his eye on the way to the hospital, but had been afraid to say anything to the doctors. Within a few days after initial admittance to UCLA, the results of several studies were in and prognosis was not good. It was determined that daddy had a brain tumor and that it had started in his lungs, with several small tumors which had been misdiagnosed as Valley Fever scarring and nodules. Momma and daddy talked and we kids were farmed out to different relatives, rotating from one place to another as momma was taking daddy back and forth to cancer treatments. Daddy was always angry and my parents seemed to fight even more. I remember feeling that every fight was somehow connected to my being born, or that stupid thing that happened when Jax kicked me. I was only four.

Daddy went to UCLA to have chemo/radiation therapies and was gone most of September, and into October 1961. The doctors stopped the treatments and told daddy they were at the end of the road and he needed to get his affairs in order. Daddy came home and spent a few weeks in his bedroom, while momma started packing up the house to move to the new one. Neither one of my parents shared what the doctor said. We all thought yay daddy is finally home and we will be like all the rest of the families around us. The last time I saw Daddy was around the 25th of November 1961. He was leaving for the hospital in a car with momma because he was having a terrible nose bleed. Momma came home that night without daddy.

My brothers and I all wanted to go see daddy and kept pestering momma to take us to see him. Momma said the hospital rules would not allow that. Daddy died the next day, just days after my baby sister Katherine's first birthday and a couple of weeks after the final closing on the new house had happened. Momma came home and announced that daddy had died and she would be making arrangements to take him by train back to Ashville, North Carolina. All us kids, except my little sister Kathy who (just turned 1, had no idea what was happening), cried and cried. Daddy had not said goodbye, we did not get to tell him we loved him. We were devastated. Momma was stoic as she explained what would be happening over the next week. Movers were hired to move the rest of our things to the new house, and unpack them. My grandma Jessie was flying down to stay with us. I remember momma being so stoic, almost like a statue, not shedding a tear. I asked momma if daddy died because I wasn't supposed to be there or because of what happened with Jax, if that is what made him sick. She just looked at me, and turned to finish packing.