



FREE RANGE HUMAN

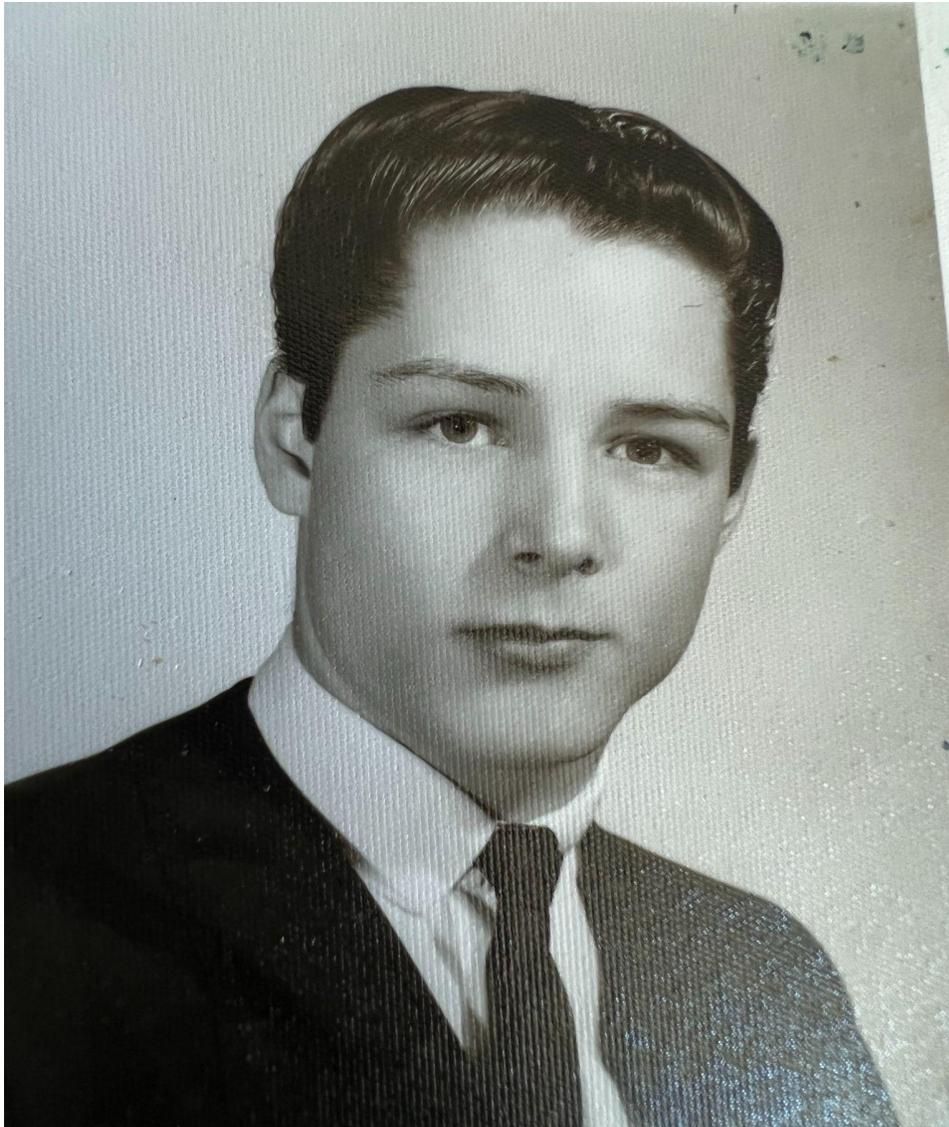
By Garrett Sweeney

Glimpses Into a Life Worth Living

The Egg in the Beginning: This is the story of the life of one particular 'Free Range Human'. Free from encumbrance, ranging across the molten landscapes of imagination; human to the core and borne from the womb of the beast of our NATION. The gestation of this particularly peculiar egg-mess-egg-ness began in the 1960's, during the dawning of that short, hedonistic moment of free love, unencumbered sex, plentiful marijuana and the best music ever played to herald in an era. Woah...wait... let's slow down before recounting the whole fiction that makes this life possible, the whole FICTION we live in that makes life possible. Imagine the life one lives in right now, in real TIME and all the potential lives lost to the concurrence of other times that spin through the space around us. Before becoming a satellite orbiting throughout the 'Age of Aquarius' there was just THE EGG, this egg I am, existing unencumbered in the land of necessity.

I came of age during the Eisenhower years in a working class Chicago suburb. I grew up STRAIGHT as the arrow up so many class conscious asses... an innocent egg unaware of the Beatniks living at the peripheries of our national consciousness continuing the Depression's hobo journey through our AMERICAN HEARTLAND in lumbering Hudsons, Chevies, Buicks and Ford steel locomotive capsules...making a home of the road...imbibing, blending, redefining American culture by pulling into its center a new, alternative fiction with NEW messages, images and music so sweetly divergent from the slag heaps of lived memory and embracing outlaw obscenities in their language, their music, their dress; and this new consciousness accompanying the Space Age race into the skies beyond the sky into the firmament and on... on to unexplored mysteries outside gravity's grip. Like grasping glimpses of the opening morning sky, we lit the road beyond the road itself; explored realms of being beyond the driver's field of vision, deep into the maw of an exploding consciousness always just around the next bend. We were traveling

full speed ahead, not knowing where nor caring where; without searching for answers until Time revealed them in the glory of living through each moment in its own time.



My school-years were oddly bookended by the two major wars of our Modern era: WWII and Vietnam. The front end of these early years saw the rise of American industrial prominence in the world. My early life developed along predictable patterns of acculturation that emerged in the years that followed WWII. The other end of this gestational period was caught in the political mire and revolutionary spirit of the anti-war movement. And my consciousness exploded along new faultlines in our national character. I was emerging amidst the messiness of a social revolution that has defined the boundary-free life that I have followed ever since. This restless modern history was the dominant friction infusing life in those times. As a youth I rode the giddy wave of a burgeoning American Empire. And, sadly, I saw uncles and older high school classmates returning from their Army tour of duty broken and troubled by the experience. They were wounded, uncaged animals let loose in a changing America. To avoid being drawn into the dramatic tragedy of Vietnam I made the sanest choice possible and parlayed my youthful experience as a machinist and mechanic into service with the U.S. Navy where, so weirdly, I trained to protect the U.S. nuclear stockpile carried around the world by our Polaris submarine fleet.

A Monumental Passage...History in the

Making...and a Home Cooked Meal My father was born in 1918. He grew up on a farm in Terre Haute - a rural part of western Indiana. His was an industrious family whose heritage was elemental in the social and economic development of their corner of the Midwest. But, his family's story begins much earlier.

My father's great-grandfather, Jacob Sweeney, born in 1708, was the family member who first came to America. He arrived, in 1749, on a ship from Rotterdam named, The Crown, and established the Sweeney family estate in Bucks County, Indiana. He and my immediate relatives were immigrants from Ireland. They bought, owned and still farm large parcels of land in Indiana. They were a proud, hard-working clan. Throughout the 1800's, they saw it as part of their legacy to promote education and strong character. And so, they built and operated a grade school, bearing our name, as well as a seminary and a high school for the betterment of their own children and all families in the region.

I was born in September, 1947, just outside of Chicago, on the South Side, one mile outside of the city limits. Some summers of my youth, I would spend those long, warm days living and working on one of the family farms. When I got back home, I would share all of my thoughts and memories with my brother, Baran. He never got a chance to experience that. I often found myself, at night in the spare bedroom, at the farm conjuring up stories and imagining my long gone relatives working the land and building a future for their children. Living on the farm during those summers was like stepping back in time. I reveled in their farming life and culture:

Everyone, up and out of bed at 5am. The smell of bacon, cut in thick slabs, from one of our own, slaughtered, 700lb pigs filling the entire

farm house; the large frying pan being worked by grandmother; mothers slicing their homemade bread; daughters spooning buttercream off the top of the milk can, filled from our cows, and then slathered on the bread; sizzling bacon heaped onto plates, leaving almost two inches of hot grease in the pan; Grandma cracking fresh eggs, collected from our own chickens and dropping them into the fry pan, one after the other, their splattering and popping adding to the music and atmosphere of a working farm family starting their day.

Each morning, Grandfather, seated at the head of the table, guided our lives and our conversation by serving as an example of strength in the face of all odds and a commitment to doing the good work of a law-abiding, honest and religious man. All the young boys, seated around him, shared their ideas about the work needing to be done and made assessments of the needs of the livestock. And so, plans would be made for the day's field work. After everyone had sat down at the humble table, there would be a moment of silence; and looking into each other's eyes, all together their voices sang, 'WE GIVE THANKS FOR THIS FOOD AND OUR LOVING FAMILY!' Then, the entire family's conversation and laughter became like a mantra song for all of us to sing as we shared the morning meal together.

Then, with haste, all the women would clear the table and begin their day of canning, cleaning, washing clothes, cutting firewood, milking cows, feeding animals, cleaning stables and preparing the next meals for the day. All the men would head out to fuel up the machinery, fire up the combine, and the baler, open the four, large, barn doors and hook up the wagons. There were hundreds of acres to cut and bale before summer's end. Grandpa always drove the combine pulling the baler, putting out one 100 lb bale after another throughout the long morning hours. The oldest son stood on the wagon heaving each bale into the air and stacking them neatly on its bed. All of the kids would gather around a bale, grabbing it together, and lift each heavy load into the air; all the while, trying to keep up with Grandpa.

At mid-day, grandpa would shut down the combine and baler, look back at us with a big, silent smile. Without words, just nodding all around, we reveled in acknowledgement of a good morning's work. Then, it was back to the house for dinner. The table would be already set. Sore, sweaty, dirty, and hungry we are all joined together again as a family. It was a sweet, short moment together so we refilled our empty stomachs. Operating this farm together is how each one of us could be in full support of each other. Soon, the men would return to their labor in the fields and the women to their chores: churning ice cream; preparing supper and cleaning the home, again.

As the sun begins to set, the wagons are pulled back to the barn. The bales are stacked there and the barn doors are closed - for another night will soon be upon us. All of the animals have been fed and put into their pens and stables. Before we sit down for supper, the entire family meets in the living room around the pot-belly, wood-burning stove. Some wood is placed inside. The sound, warmth, and smell of glowing pine wafts throughout our home. Together we join in a circle, hold hands and nothing is said. Nothing needs to be said. We know we are strong. We know we are family.

After enjoying a simple supper together, we put our hard-working, honest selves to bed, sharing love and lots of warm hugs on our way to our rooms. For a farmer's family, this is life at its best! And when I leave to return to Chicago, along with my luggage I bring back to Chicago a load of love, family, respect, commitment, dedication and a joy that follows me to school in the Fall and throughout the cold winter. Again and again, in my heart and mind, I return to the gentle memories of farm life and realize I have found a reason to be on this planet.



War Stories...Love on the Plains...Suburban

Wilderness In 1942, my father and many of his relatives, like most Americans, listened to FDR on the radio each week and knew that the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the atrocities in Europe were threatening American shores. And so, many of our relatives went into the army to offer their talent and support to the Allies, taking them away from the security of their families and their way of life. And while they filled

many different roles, my father was stationed as a mechanic with the Army in the Philippines. Leaving the life of a proud farmer he became a cog in the military machine and part of the worst organization representative of the human race: WAR.

At the end of the war, in 1945, many of the members of the Sweeney families continued their careers in the military. But, after having witnessed so much death, unimaginable pain and the loss of many friends, my father chose to leave the military. Understandably, the war formed the person I knew as my Dad. As most returning veterans did, my father got married within a year. Fortunately, perhaps with a bit of luck for me, my father was discharged from the Army in Texas and found work there. With his strong character and gentle pride he impressed a young woman who was born in Paris, Texas, a small, slow-paced town where life was simple, between Dallas and Fort Worth. Where the warm, humid weather from the South meets the hot dry winds from the North and where, it has been aptly said, there are only two seasons: Summer and Not Summer.

My mother's family included college professors, writers, teachers, mayors and the governor of Texas at the time. Needless to say, they were highly regarded pillars of business, education, politics and the Arts, in their corner of the great state of Texas. These two young lovers made a strange combination: an Indiana dirt farmer and a beautiful southern lady strolling hand in hand. After a short courtship, and despite the consternation of her parents, they got married, settled in Chicago and began their life together by raising a family.



In 1947, just two years after the war ended and a year after my parents were married, I was born. As I grew up, in the Fifties and Sixties, life for me was truly a treasure. My mom and dad, with the help of friends, hand built a small quaint home in an unincorporated area outside of Chicago on the South Side. At first, there were only a few houses anywhere in the area. Just open fields, trees and small ponds. I was given total freedom to roam and explore on my own. For me and my friends it was a rural paradise. But, it wasn't a paradise for everybody. One day, off in the distance, there were sirens and I could see smoke. I ran over as fast as I could and saw a house on fire. By then the fire department was there. To my shock they were watering

the lawn and the trees. Not a drop touched the house. There was a crowd of white people milling around, watching the house burn. I asked a lady why they are letting the house burn to the ground. She replied, “**BECAUSE BLACK PEOPLE LIVE HERE!**”

Over time, on the south side of the city, new neighborhoods continued to spring up, like wild mushrooms, full of new people of many nationalities, hired to provide labor for the approaching semi-industrial shops that serviced Chicago's growth. In this newly burgeoning suburb, life was 'nasty, brutish' and sure to be short unless you had an angle that could disarm the neighborhood thugs. As tough on me as he was, my dad taught me to take care of myself in our corner of the world. First and foremost, I learned to avoid trouble as much as possible. But, when push came to shove, he taught me how to shove back. And it's to his credit that I survived to tell this story of The Eden and others.

A Growing Unease...First Things First...A Lesson

Learned On the South side, as the city encroached on our rural paradise, life became hard-edged. Most every wage earner worked in a factory or one of the industries that made sure the business of big business kept humming. Every father I knew worked either on an assembly line building something that needed buying or fixing something that had broken.

My father worked for the city as a plumber. We were a blue collar clan. In the caste society that we lived in, everybody carried some form of dislike, prejudice, fear or hatred for someone else - someone other than themselves - or even an entire nationality. And they all returned the sentiment until it permeated even the air in homes and the conversations at dinner tables. Some days, walking down the street to school or to the grocery store for food, I could feel the hatred rising around me, it seemed, from underground. The overblown sense of pride that fueled prejudice was palpable.

Dad was a tall, skinny, wiry bundle of contradictions. Seemed to be happy, but hardly ever showed or expressed it. Had a gentle demeanor, but at the drop of a hat would go into being a mean, racist, cruel person. He worked for the Chicago Housing Authority. First and foremost, he was a steady worker and a good provider. Every weekday he'd wake early, drink three cups of coffee and...out the door he'd go. After his 8 hour shift he'd get home in time to fall asleep in his easy chair until we were called to dinner. After dinner he'd get back to his chair and we would all watch tv on our black and white tv screen. Then off to bed we went. The next morning we'd awake and repeat the routine.

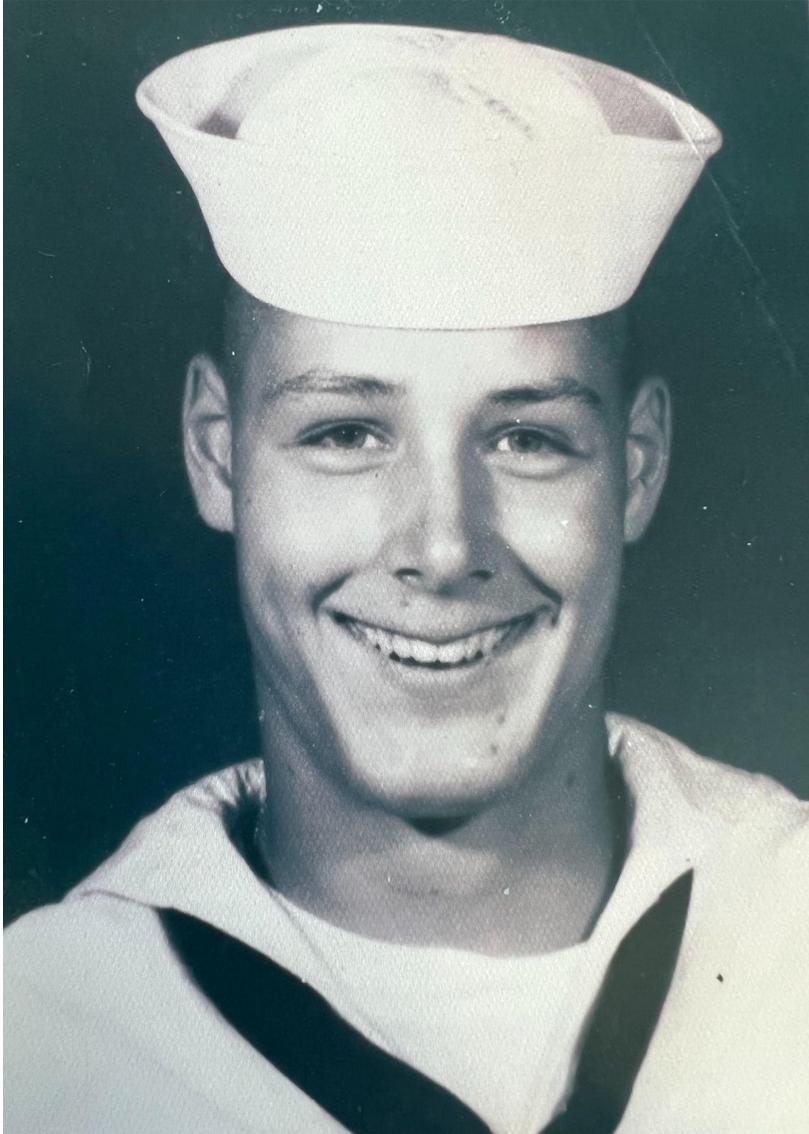
But, on the weekends, my dad was a free man and when he wasn't showing me how to rebuild an engine or repair something or help with chores, he'd have us out on more rural adventures. If I wasn't in Indiana on a very short visit to see our grandparents farm during the summer with our entire family, including my younger brother Baran (by now 6 years old), we would go camping and fishing. I always cleaned the fish. We ate a lot of fish. We'd go to different places up and down the region and off to neighboring states every weekend. Sometimes his buddies would join us. In the winter time my dad and I and his buddies would grab our shotguns and head to Indiana where my dad was from. When I was a very young kid I started with a BB gun and moved up to a 4-10 shotgun. Mom and brother would stay home. We hunted at the farms that he grew up on for rabbits and pheasants. I was always the one who cleaned and prepared the rabbits or pheasants for mom to cook. That was then what was on our dinner table in the evening. I sincerely hated doing that! Leading me to become a pacifist and an animal lover. Never ever to kill again.

My dad wasn't prone to sharing emotions (at all); like many of the men who were lucky enough to return home from service in the Second World War, he wanted to get on with a new life. He certainly wasn't the cuddly-dad type, like the Rob Petries and Ward Cleavers who would show up on sixties sit-coms on the black and white tv's around the time I was finishing 8th grade. He never once uttered the words, I LOVE YOU, to me, my mom or my brother. But, he did teach me to stand up for myself, be proud, to think creatively, work hard to my best and to be confident in following my own destiny - even though he couldn't ever have imagined what I was destined for. My beautiful, smart, compassionate, artistically creative, loving mother provided me with the strong foundation that set me on a lifelong path of devotion to the Good, teaching love, respect, kindness, for all humans and animals and especially supporting our dear MOTHER EARTH.

Trained to Kill...Damaged Goods...A Nuclear

Adventure While I was still in high school In 1964, I felt that I was in love and proposed to Roseanne. I took all of my savings and bought an engagement ring. She said yes and thought my life was on its way to a happy family. At the same time I saw so many older classmates I knew drafted and sent to battle in Vietnam. A large number of them, way, way too many, came back dead in a wooden box. And many of those who came back alive were mentally insane or severely disabled. YOU CAN NOT TAKE YOUNG KIDS, TRAIN THEM TO KILL, GIVE THEM A GUN, PUT THEM INTO AN ONGOING, RAGING, SLAUGHTERING, ENVIRONMENT AND HAVE THEM GO OUT DAY AFTER DAY TO KILL OTHER HUMANS without expecting there will be dire consequences. AND YOU CAN NOT HAVE THEM SEE THEIR FELLOW SOLDIERS AND SO-CALLED ENEMIES BLOWN INTO PIECES, AND PERHAPS LOSE PARTS OF THEIR OWN BODIES without expecting there will be dire consequences. AND IF BY CHANCE THEY SURVIVE, YOU CAN NOT SEND THEM HOME AND EXPECT THEY WILL LIVE A NORMAL LIFE without expecting there will be dire consequences.

By the time I got close to graduating from high school in 1965 I had spent time talking to some of my friends who had made it back. The stories I was told made me sick, sad and very afraid. To avoid becoming a grunt and being drafted into the army and sent directly onto the battlefield, I signed up for the Navy three months before I even graduated. I WAS NOT GOING TO KILL ANYONE! I was however willing to fulfill my obligation to the military draft.



After I graduated, it was just two weeks before I was shipped off to San Diego for three months of boot camp. I said goodbye to Roseanne, and promised to be back after my obligation to the military. Boot camp is where they take young innocent kids and turn them into dedicated believers of the concept of war.

After boot camp, because of all the training to be a machinist that I had received in high school, I was told I'd be staying in San Diego for an additional eight months of intense non-stop training to become a master machinist. After completing what they called A school, I finally

got two weeks leave in Chicago, just before I had to leave for Spain. I shared some of the time with my best friend from highschool, Patrick, whom I'd grown up with. He had been drafted into the army and trained to be a medic. He was heading to Vietnam. The last day before he shipped out we saw each other and we were able to share what turned out to be a very emotional time together. Knowing the lifespan of a medic was likely very short, he started crying. I looked directly into his sad, watery eyes. "Take my class ring with you for good luck and bring it back to me when you return," I told him. He said, "I PROMISE I WILL."

Patrick did keep his word; but, at a great cost. Immediately, after being released from active duty, 4 years later, he did return and found where I was living. One afternoon there was a knock at my door. With not a word we just stood there looking deeply into each other's eyes. He briefly told me stories about the many bodies my ring had been INSIDE while he'd tried to save kids' lives. He handed me my ring which I barely recognized. The school insignia was gone, the date worn and the stone cracked. His eyes started to water and he took in a long slow deep breath. With stuttering words, he said, "BECAUSE OF THIS RING, AND MY PROMISE TO YOU, TO BRING IT BACK TO YOU, MY FRIEND, I AM ALIVE! THANK YOU MY BEST FRIEND!" Then he turned around and slowly walked away. As I stood there, watching him walk down the path, I was unable to breath. Having not spoken a word, myself, I fell to the floor crying. Both our lives had changed forever. We would never see each other again. We had both been to war, but our experiences had been so very different. The war had broken him and by the time he'd returned home, his luck had run out. I heard that after visiting me upon returning from Vietnam, he went to live at home and ended up so damaged that he began beating his mother. Later, I heard he had been declared insane. I'm sure he'd be a candidate for having post traumatic stress disorder and brain damage because of the carnage he saw and his exposure to agent orange. I will truly forever miss him!

My Overseas Deployment



Two days after saying 'Goodbye' to Patrick, he was off to Vietnam as a medic and I was on a military plane headed to Rota, Spain along the Andalusian coast. Upon arriving I checked in aboard the USS Holland, AS 32.



Denton

The Holland was a 599 foot long repair ship that serviced nuclear powered, polaris missile submarines. I would remain in service to that ship for my entire remaining two years of active duty - except, of course, during leaves and free time when in port!



This was during the height of the Vietnam war, and yet, I was lucky enough to enjoy my time on the ship. First off, there is no higher level of expectation put on a machinist than doing one's best work in the machine shop, aboard ship! We were tasked with making replacement parts for the United States fleet of nuclear powered submarines. Gosh, we were damn good at our work. Everyone in our shop was exceptionally talented and competitive and we were superlative members of the crew. We all took pride in producing new parts, machined to zero tolerance, for those behemoth submarines. I would start with a blueprint, absorb the information and head to the tool room to gather the acids I needed to test the steel in the stock rack. Finding

the proper required stock specified in the blueprint I'd cut off enough to begin the magical transformation and head back to the tool room to gather the micrometers, calipers and blank tool bits. Starting with the multiple grit grinding wheels, I carefully custom created the cutting bits for each different step for each different machine that I would be using. Dang, we are now truly talking about how I was starting to employ my many, many years of training and personal talent. This is what separates a good machinist from a master machinist. I was very sincerely prepared to take on the responsibility that the submariners expected of me in order to make sure these massively complicated machines operated flawlessly. They spent 3 months deep under the sea. Taking my tool bits and my stock I'd go to each of the incredible, high end professional machines and prepare the different blueprint requirements. To successfully turn in the blueprint and the new complicated part meant meeting ZERO tolerances on my first try. Different blueprint each time, different type of part. Different types of metal stock. Some are much more difficult than others. Day after day. Year after year. And I was getting better every day. It was a monumental source of satisfying pride. After my time in the Navy, I have continued to employ that same level of high standards in my work ethics and how I conduct my personal relationships! Best perhaps if we were all held to a higher level of responsibility. I am truly very lucky! And I'm very thankful!

A Spanish Fling... Lost in a Foreign Port ...and a

Quick Release For my second year of active duty, we were docked, as I've said, in the port of Rota Spain. I spent much of my off time exploring the town, the Andalusian coast and frequently traveled to the city of Seville. The entire cost of a weekend trip to Seville, including a round trip train ticket, lodging, great Spanish food and a lot of Spanish beer was only \$5.00. It turns out I spent many weekends there. Once in a while, when I didn't have duty, I would spend the night with a pretty American girl married to a guy on the naval base. She had blonde curls, small tits and a pert ass. She lived in a small house on the outskirts of town that she and her husband rented. While he was on duty on the base I'd be there, beside her in his bed. I'm not sure how she pulled that off and I never asked, because she so clearly enjoyed having a man and I was happy to be that man. As soon as I'd walk in the door, my visit was entirely, solely and amazingly about making love! **All night long!!** Dang! We probably set a record for different positions in different locations throughout the house. I always wondered if there were others, like myself, coming in and out of her and the front door. I never met her husband; the USS Holland had almost 4000 servicemen aboard and thousands more worked on the base; somewhere on the base was a heart bound to be broken.

I've often wondered, why have I fallen into strangely precarious situations like this? And even stranger, how have I managed to live through them all? I think it's because of a willingness to explore the excitement of a rogue wink; or to take hold of those soft fingers brushing my sleeveless arm; to open my soul to the vast possibilities for unforeseen adventure that present themselves in the insane moments of frenzied expectation that are there waiting to come to life, in those brief moments of their awareness, that peek out from behind the veneer of normalcy we try to wrap around ourselves. In our vanity, we attempt to give meaning to the mess of the Universe that surrounds us, a natural universe that doesn't care for us at all, that

has no knowing, no heart felt tug, no children, only being as being is - without purpose and without end. I have always chosen to follow the frenzied expectation when it presents itself... "holy road, madman road, rainbow road, guppy road, any road. It's an anywhere road for everybody anyhow." And I think it's a wonder I am still here, ready to get on the next road and to arrive at new destinations.

One afternoon I was hanging out with Dan, a friend of mine from the ship. We were in the countryside near Rota. Just playing around in a waterfall. Above us was a train track running along a raised bed of gravel. Off in the distance we could hear the sound of a coal burning locomotive coming through the woods. Dan, extremely excited, said, 'Let's try something really crazy!' 'Hell, ya,' I said, having no idea what he was suggesting. As I followed him, we ran up to the train tracks, he laid down on the slope with his head eight inches away from the steel track. Unquestioning, without thinking, I did the same. How about that for pure, naive stupidity? The excitement and fear alone was way beyond my ability to comprehend as I lay there not even able to breath, think, or move, not even slightly knowing what to expect. Then, I heard the train coming around the bend. The intensity mounted exponentially! We were both frozen to the ground as if glued to the hard packed gravel. With its horn blasting, stack puffing, wheels screaming, the massive locomotive roared by us, violently shaking the tracks, kicking up rocks and strong winds. The dust and detritus pummel our heads. The many different noises were both ear shattering and exciting! Sensationally shaking our entire bodies! It seemed like there must have been six million train cars behind that locomotive. I somehow divinely knew this feeling of awesome wonder would never end! After the caboose passed, we lay there, our bodies quivering! Never ever to be the same again! Definitely setting an extremely high standard for the exciting, challenging, daring, fun-filled days ahead in my life!

Soon, I had a Spanish girlfriend. Her name was Sarita. It was the most proper relationship I have ever had in my entire life. Definitely no

hanky panky. Not even a kiss. I was young, enamored and in love with Sarita, as I was with the entire country, and I was happy simply being able to share time with her - although it took lots of chaperoned visits to get to the point where we'd go out alone together, without her mother, Natalia, or her sister, Faustina, on my other arm. That I was finally allowed to visit with Sarita alone was proof of how much they trusted me. And while I had to admit to a strong longing to be with her, in the carnal sense, with her in my arms, I honored their trust.

Just holding Sarita's hand and walking through the streets of Rota I began to fully experience, for the first time, a deep sense of true love. We laughed and sang Spanish songs as Sarita helped me learn the Spanish language. I helped her with her English. I was sincerely in love with Sarita. Her sweetness was unsurpassable; and I also fell in love with Spanish culture. I was amazed by the many ways in which Spanish culture differed from that of America. I came to sincerely love the beautiful country of Spain and its people. And so, I was deeply saddened when our ship had to leave for a new port. I had to leave Sarita and all I had shared there with her for a year. But, after that first year in Spain, my ship was ordered to rotate to Charleston South Carolina.

Before we crossed the Atlantic ocean our machine shop was shut down, as always when we were out to sea. And after leaving Rota, we docked in Portsmouth, England, for what was called a 'Liberty Stop'. As we entered the harbor our three tiers of decks were lined with sailors in full dress standing at attention. The ship's bells were ringing, its horns were blowing and hundreds of people on shore stood yelling and waving their arms, greeting us upon our arrival. It truly was a moment to behold. After we finished docking and all lines were secured, the ship's fueling began and provisions were brought aboard for our upcoming crossing of the Atlantic ocean.

Liberty in Portsmouth...Love on the small side...

After an interminable trip north up the Atlantic, finally, the liberty whistle sounded and all non-essential personnel were free to take their liberty on the English shore. This included a friend of mine, Carl, and myself. Heading down the gang ramp, we had no idea where to go or what to do; but, as soon as we exited the military gates, the dingy port presented itself in a flurry of beat down bars, worn out hotels and dim lit diners. Strangers on the streets waved, saluted and called out to greet us as we explored this beat down corner of the Port on a foggy weekday evening. Walking down the sidewalk past a grocery, I grabbed an orange from a tall pile. The whole pyramid disintegrated, orange globes bouncing and rolling over the grimey pavement and into the gutter. Our pace quickened as the store keeper hustled outside looking for a guilty party; but, we were walking and whistling away, already drunk with excitement and bounding toward some undiscovered source of pleasure.

As soon as we rounded the corner, I began bouncing the fresh orange off of my right bicep and catching it, deftly, at the bottom of its arc. In the distance we spied two young ladies wearing identical blue dresses with pink aprons around their waists. Oddly, as we got closer, they didn't grow any taller. Walking toward us they truly appeared, instead, to be receding into our midst. These two apparitions dawdled right up to us and blocked our passage on the narrow sidewalk. We four paused. Standing there, their noses reached just barely level with our belt buckles; Carl and I looked down into their wide eyes. The shorter of these two uniformed sprites asked me if I knew any other tricks; so I leapt into a handstand, bringing them to an uproarious laughter. We all stood for a moment eyeing each other in silence until I winked with my left eye at the impish English chick to my right and with my right eye at her companion to the left. The girls looked at each other and began to giggle.

Both wore very cute, identical waitresses' uniforms. We were in our Navy uniforms. The taller girl told us her name was Darcie. She stood about 4' 3", with aquamarine eyes and short blonde hair cut in a pixie that gently wrapped around her puckish face. The other girl's name was Lattie. She was barely 3' tall with equally sublime blue eyes and long blonde hair that nearly reached the ground. It turned out the two girls were sisters. As we stood there, face to crotch under the dim street lamp, it began to become increasingly clear that we were going to have a bounce with these ladies tonight. We had just left Spain where I had lived a proper Spanish life with Sarita. Meetings like this didn't happen there with Spanish girls; so, Carl and I both jumped at the chance to meet a couple of young English midgets in an unknown port in the middle of the night for an unexpected get-together. When the taller of the two, on my right, asked us if we would like to get together, after they got off of work at 10:00 pm, we enthusiastically assured them we would return to meet them.

Carl and I spent the rest of the evening wandering throughout town from one pub to another and returned, on drunken legs, to the restaurant, promptly at 10 pm. We were rather surprised when they came out, took our hands and Darcie said, "Let's go to our house." We all laughed and joked as we headed to their home. When we got there we were introduced to their parents who talked about how much they loved meeting Americans and drinking our coffee. After a short time, the parents told us that they were going out and would be back much later that evening. Much later! "**Have a good time,**" they said. Immediately after they left the door, to my utter surprise, with no hesitation, Lattie looked at me and said, "Can I show you around the house?" I said, "Of course!!" She took my hand and, avoiding every other room in the house, we went directly to her bedroom.

Within moments I'm in bed making out with Lattie. The odd difference in our heights made kissing her a geometric challenge. She had all the components of a beautiful woman, in a reduced package. With both of us sitting on the bed I had to bend so far forward the weight of my head dropped me into her lap. Then, she tried standing on the bed beside me. Bent down over me, our lips met; but, my head was cocked back so far my neck began to spasm. I am so surprised by her excitement and willingness to instantly, totally engage in such passion that I am immediately, sensationally turned on! Just then, Carl comes into the bedroom with Darcie and they start their own make out contortions on the other bed. Apparently, he'd gotten a true tour of the house.

This is almost too unbelievable to be true. One minute we are kissing and before I know it we are both totally naked. WOW!! It was rather strange because we could either be kissing or making love; but not both at the same time because she was so very short. I was a bit boggled by the necessary adjustments to our union, as with any human being, until I accepted that I could have all of her, just not all at the same time. What a magnificent body she had! Tiny hands, puckish mouth, pert breasts, and somewhat short-waisted (if you know what I mean), she sat on the bed, her feet swaying above the floor. With the confidence, grace and professionalism of a conductor, she took my baton between her fingers and performed a magic that enlarged and enhanced my throbbing desire. Her deft movements directed me upon her as she lay on the bed. Our disparities provided for an unusual dance between foreplay and intercourse - seeing as we couldn't kiss and screw simultaneously. Setting the tempo, she whispered instructions and directed our performance, ensuring the proper and appropriate moments of entry and exit. And so, we began our dance: lips and tongues wrapped in embrace, she offered the magic touch of every inch of her magnificent, vibrating body. Then, guiding me

upward, upon her, my chest at her mouth, she suckled my nipples and guided me inside her. As I gazed toward the wooden headboard, Lattie's screaming and moaning launched us into a sexually pounding adventure of ecstasy. After hours of trading between kissing, sucking, licking, poking, rubbing, and the joy of monumental climaxing, we lay together in a totally astounding bliss after which we were hugging and caressing for a long time. Then, Lattie, out of breath, gently, slowly, with a lingering passion in her soft, loving voice whispered in my ear, "I think it's time for you to go now. Do you want to take my panties with you to remember me?" I told her that this miraculously, mystically, divine moment will be in my mind and heart everyday for the rest of my life! And, "Yes," I would take those cute little panties. She pulled me tightly against her sweaty, shaking body. Our arms and legs coiled together forming one and a half bodies. We passionately looked into each other's eyes and kissed exultantly! **I said Lattie, please remember my name. GARRETT SWEENY. Someday we WILL reconnect!**

Carl and I slowly put on our uniforms as the girls, obviously and intentionally, remained breathtakingly naked. As we were mumbling our goodbyes, we all shared a sweet, compassionately amazing long warm hug together. This made it phenomenally, excruciatingly hard to even consider ever leaving. I thought, "What in the world do we or should we say now?" **AT LEAST I GAVE LATTIE MY NAME. SO PERHAPS, IF SHE WANTED, SHE COULD FIND ME ONE DAY.** Yet, before I could say another word, we literally floated out the door. I will forever regret not getting her address and telephone number. **DANG I SINCERELY HOPE DESTINY BRINGS OUR LIVES TOGETHER AGAIN ONE DAY!** I could hardly walk straight. My brain and body was experiencing an overload of emotion and physical joy from our incredibly magical time together. Besides, that's all the girls may have wanted. **SINCE THEN, I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED IF I MAY HAVE A VERY SHORT SON OR DAUGHTER IN ENGLAND!**

Crossing the 'cross' seas...Heartbroken in

Chicago...Married and mistaken With the USS Holland ready to cross the Atlantic Ocean to Charleston, South Carolina, we prepared to disembark from England. As we sailed out of Portsmouth harbor, we left with lots of fanfare; every deck was lined full of sailors in their dress uniforms standing at attention. Again on the shore line there were hundreds of people yelling and waving American flags. The crossing was scheduled to take seven days. As it turned out we ran into a massive storm. The seas kicked up waves over thirty to forty feet high. Our ship was a little over 599 feet long and very tall. It was also very wide and had a relatively flat bottom which did not make it safe or comfortable in a storm. Ours was a repair ship not really designed for the open seas. It normally stayed in port tied to a dock so the submarines could come up alongside of us to be repaired. On the top deck was a huge crane used to load and unload Polaris missiles onto our ship. There was actually dynamite placed under the huge crane so it could be jettisoned off the ship if it looked like it's extra weight on top of the ship would cause us to sink during the trip across the ocean to Charleston.

Most of the crew of over 4000 became extremely seasick. During the storm the only thing we were given to eat were crackers. They would kind of swell up in your tummy relieving hunger; they were the only thing most of us could keep down. This made for a horrid environment throughout the ship. The ship would head up a wave, and when it crested the top of the wave the humongous prop would come out of the water and the whole back of the ship would start vibrating so intensely that the shaking would throw us around the cabin. The waves violently tossed the ship about like a toy, and everything that wasn't bolted or tied down was flying from one side of the ship to the other. At the same time the ship was rolling from side to side, up to 30 degrees or more. We were left hanging on to one side for a long time before the clumsy ship would roll back, causing us to scurry over only

to get hung up on the other side. By now, as much as possible, everything was either secured or banging around in a large heap. Of course, all of the weather decks were off limits and all of the watertight hatches were locked tight. It's hard to convey what it was like living through this storm for three days. Many of the crucial activities still had to be performed. I have to give credit to the many men who performed so bravely, allowing us to weather the storm with no loss of life. Although we were definitely beaten up.

As soon as the seas calmed down the officers on the bridge set our course back towards Charleston South Carolina. Upon arriving in Charleston, back in America, I immediately requested a two week leave. The leave was approved. I hitchhiked to Chicago. After arriving at my dad's house and spending a proper amount of time with him, I immediately called up my fiance from high school. Expecting joyish kisses and never ending hugs. She told me she was dating other guys, and had a date that night, and could we plan for another day. So, I said, please stay where you're at? She agreed. I scurried over to her house to get my engagement ring back. After being so very unfaithful while I was overseas, I understood what she meant. That was the end of the expectations that I originally had when I, with a true heart, asked Roseanne to marry me and gave her naively a engagement ring. I have no idea what became of her life. Obviously a white picket fence, kids, and growing old together was not meant to be for us.

A few days later, I called up a girl that I'd known in high school. Her name was Linda. I asked her if she wanted to come down to Charleston and live with me. She was only 17 years old and I was only 19 years old. She said she would really like to come down and stay with me. But, first, I needed to talk to her father. That turned out to not be a very pleasant encounter. So, before he was able to physically express his feelings on my face, I made for the door leaving my best wishes behind.

When I got back to Charleston I got a small apartment where I could stay when I didn't have duty on the ship. Two weeks later, Linda called me up and said she was on her way down. Gosh, golly, gee-whiz...I was so incredibly happy! When she arrived we settled in together in my small apartment. Everything seemed idealistically wonderful. A week later we were in a gas station and I was filling up the car with gas. She went over to use the payphone (this was long before cell phones) while I finished fueling the car. I paid the attendant and walked over next to her as she talked on the phone. She waved me to the phone and said, very quietly, "My dad wants to talk to you." I took the phone, put it to my ear and said, "Hello." Her dad said, **"If you do not marry my daughter immediately I will come down there and kill you with my bare hands!"** I replied with volleys of 'Yes, sirs' and said goodbye.

The next day, I asked a couple of my buddies from the machine shop on the ship to be Witnesses at the wedding. I stopped at the apartment and picked up Linda and we went to a Justice of the Peace and got married. That was all a very mind-bending experience. I had no idea what lay ahead of me in my life now, but I was definitely married; and there was, suddenly, a whole different energy in our relationship after that. Neither one of us could comprehend what was going on or how we should conduct ourselves. It was definitely, extremely odd. The relationship turned from a joyous being together into Linda spending most of her time crying. When I tried to console her my words went unnoticed. Evenings, returning home from the base, Linda would be at the kitchen table, with her head in her hands, sobbing, her tears soaking the long black hair hanging across her face. Every morning it was monumentally difficult for me to go back to

the naval base, board the ship, stand at quarters and gather myself together to be the professional Machinist I needed to be. This painstaking heartbreak seemed never ending even though the situation only lasted a matter of a few weeks.

On the fourth Friday after our marriage I came back to the apartment and she was **GONE!** The apartment looked a mess, a television newsman blathered on and her closet was empty. The combination of disbelief, fear, and anxiety was overwhelming. I had no ability to even begin to understand where she'd gone, why she'd left or what to do about it. I found myself driving around aimlessly for days when I didn't have duty. Sometimes I realized I'd been driving up and down the same streets for hours without realizing I had already searched there without success. This whole time I was hoping she had not contacted her father, knowing that he was already looking forward to the chance to twist my head off with his bare hands and joyfully watch the blood drain from my body.

As I searched the streets I even went so far as to put handwritten signs with my telephone number and a picture of my missing wife on telephone poles next to signs for a missing puppy.

Each day, returning to the ship, those friends who had been the witnesses at my wedding seemed to try to give me some support. They kept telling me that they felt so sorry for me and offered to help find Linda. After three days of heart-wrenching, exhausting, frustrating days and nights I decided to find some comfort with my three friends from the Machine Shop. I drove over to the house they'd rented a few miles away. As I pulled up into the yard I could see through the screen door into the house and through to the kitchen where, with her

back to me, Linda was doing the dishes. My brain instantly stopped functioning. I stood in the yard feeling that I had no control over any part of my entire existence. The sound of my car engine must have gotten her attention and she turned to look outside. Seeing me, her eyes spoke to me so loudly of her dread that it drained the blood from the few remaining operating cells in my brain. An emptiness filled my soul unlike anything I had ever felt before. I turned around and left. Somehow, I managed to drive back to my apartment. My mind was blank, with no memory of where I was, who I was, or why I was.

The next day I managed to gather myself together enough to make it back to the ship for work. There I was met with the cruelest form of pain ever devised by the sickest persons on this planet! The truth of what was going on had been openly shared with everyone but myself. The overwhelming camaraderie that everyone seemed to share wasn't based on our friendships, it was predicated on the fabrication that I was the nicest guy on the entire ship because I let everybody sleep with my wife. They were joking about it, slapping me on the back and making plans for more fun with Linda, later that evening, while I began to die inside. I have no idea what Linda was thinking or why she left. I never saw her or spoke to her again. Dang what an extraordinarily confusing mind twisting adventurously love challenging trip life can be!

To this day I literally have no idea how I managed to continue to function. Perhaps because I was able to ignore the despicable shipmates they eventually let go of it. Or perhaps they started to realize what truly miserable jerks they all were. Although no one ever said they were sorry, I have never seen or heard from Linda or my so-called friends again. Even though Linda continued to collect the bulk of my pay the entire duration of my active duty time in the Navy. A

few months after I became inactive from the navy I had my own apartment. One day I got a knock on my door and a cop handed me a large envelope and said, "I AM SERVING YOU WITH THESE DIVORCE PAPERS." As soon as he left, I immediately without hesitation threw them, unopened, into the garbage. I may even still be married to Linda. But, at least her dad didn't have the opportunity to fulfill his burning desire to with his own hands disassemble my body and with joy watch me slowly die.

Age of Aquarius In the 60's I totally became a Hippy.

WHAT ARE YOU? WHAT AM I?

I am Irish. My entire family lineage for generations have solely lived in Ireland. I was born in Chicago. And have never set foot in Ireland. So am I truly Irish? I claim to be a Catholic. Both my grandparents and parents all went to church every Sunday of their entire lives; and donated 10% of their small weekly income every week. If you have never been in a church, never ever donate a nickel of your income to the church. Are you a Catholic?

Or if you work as a stock broker and your hair is just a little bit longer than your super-clean-cut colleagues. When they all meet they shake hands in a professional way. You hold up your hand and give the peace sign. Are you made out to be a stock broker?

The dictionary describes a hippie as a "PERSON, ESPECIALLY OF THE 1960'S, WHO REJECTED ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONS AND VALUES AND SOUGHT SPONTANEITY, DIRECT PERSONAL RELATIONS, EXPRESSING LOVE, PEACE AND EXPANDED CONSCIOUSNESS, OFTEN EXPRESSED EXTERNALLY IN THE WEARING OF CASUAL FOLKSY CLOTHING, BEADS, HEADBANDS, AND USED GARMENTS, ECT."

Was I becoming a hippy?

I graduated from high school in 1965. The Vietnam War was raging. Sadly, people of all generations we're dying. Young people in college were protesting. I could not comprehend the logic of War. It was very easy for me to believe in the concept of love and the hope for peace. And so, I aligned my perspective with the new hippie generation. But, it wasn't until one day when I was actually in the Navy that a friend of

mine, Connor, and I were actually smoking marijuana. That joint opened up my mind to an expanded consciousness. I was not allowed to express this new world consciousness while on the ship. But, when off duty, I started to take on the characteristics of being a hippie.

One day, while off duty in the small trailer we rented, Connor and I heard on the radio that there was a 'Love In' at the park downtown in Charleston, South Carolina. Connor and I went down to the park. The park was pretty much empty, except for three people sitting on the grass in the center singing love songs and playing their guitars. Connor and I joined them. We started singing with them songs of peace and love. Soon, we saw more people coming into the park from all different directions. The entire park and all of the streets around the park were suddenly entirely full of people singing love songs together! It is a moment I will never ever forget! Many hearts and minds were changed that day! A photographer from the Newspaper managed to get close enough to our group to take a photo of me, Connor and the three others sitting in a circle playing guitars and singing our hearts out! The next day, it was on the front page of the newspaper with a headline in big capital letters, **The Largest "Love In" In America!** By the time I got back to the ship, on Monday, most everybody had seen the photo and read the article. From that day on Connor and I were always known as, and called THE HIPPIES by thousands of sailors, officers, and Marines on the ship! It is an honor I have held in my heart and soul every day since then! There will never ever be too much love, peace, and respect in this world! And although we have a ways to go, I have devoted my entire life to fulfilling that dreamful goal.

In 1969, when I got out of the Navy, my first job after settling down back in Chicago was managing a restaurant. But, very soon, I found myself dissatisfied with that life. Working day shifts and wearing black polyester trousers was antithetical to the hippie culture I so enjoyed. So, I started asking amongst my friends if anybody wanted to hitchhike around Europe with me, like so many other young spirits intent on seeing up close the world outside American shores. Charlie said he would try it. So, I quit my job and off we went. We traveled through many countries. Eventually, we got back to Chicago. By experiencing all of that time and all those miles and all those cities with Charlie I realized the world is full of extremely interesting adventurous travelers; you can never truly be alone. So, the next many times I returned to Europe, I always just got up and decided to go, and took off on my own, ready to be with others in my travels, or to travel alone.

On one adventure I was hitchhiking through Germany and found myself in BERLIN Germany. At that time, for former service personnel, all it took to get onto a military base was your passport. I didn't have any money and nowhere in particular to go. So I went to the Army base. Right away lots of guys came to me and, seeing how I dressed, said, "Wow, a hippie, please come and stay with us in our barracks". So, I ended up spending my next many nights with the soldiers in their barracks. Now, that was quite a trip! At night we would all sit around in the common area. There would be music playing and candles burning. Someone would cut chunks of hash the size of a slice of bread off of a brick and hold it with a pair of pliers, he would light it from a candle and pass it around the room. Everyone kept toking until the room filled with smoke. I was rather astonished that this was actually happening right there on an army base in one of the barracks.

But, I figured it was a sign about how deeply hippie culture had spread into the mainstream.

I had brought with me a very thin, inexpensive sleeping bag I had been using in my travels. One of the guys said, "I would love to have a civilian sleeping bag. Can I trade you for a high-end, all-weather mummy military sleeping bag?" For a traveling hitchhiker in the winter in Germany, it was virtually a life-saving gift! We both thanked each other for the trade. Soon thereafter, the need to travel and experience my destiny called me back out into the world for more adventure. I made my way back down into Spain, eventually ending up in the Basque country. It is a small, very incredibly unique place. I immediately befriended people who offered to share their home. The hospitality was literally overwhelming! The food was incredible! At night we would all sit around and the guys would play their Spanish guitars and the girls would dance with Castanets in their hands wearing their traditional dresses. Everyone joined in to sing traditional Spanish songs. And although I thought this well could be, and perhaps should have been, a place I could spend the rest of my life, yet again the desire to place myself in the hands of destiny and whatever it offered me harkened my departure. With many hugs and grateful thanks, out to the road, again, I went in search of adventure.

And so, I made my way through Spain, the country I love the most, more, even, than my own! This was all back in the early '70s. Spain and all the people were still living in a strange Time Warp of the past. There were very few, if any, so-called modern inventions. Life was lived much like it had been for thousands of years. When I got to Barcelona the Ciutat Vella, Barri, Raval, el Born and la Ribera, all of what is called the old part of Barcelona, was as refreshing to my view

of the world as the sun shining upon my face and heart on a fantastically magnificent warm day after a cold rainy night! The ancient innocence of the City forever realigned my vision of reality.

I soon decided to take a boat over to the island of Ibiza. It was full of joyous travelers from all over the world. On the boat going over, a young girl came up to me and said, I don't like the guy I am traveling with, can I travel with you? " I enthusiastically said, "Yes!" Her name was Amber. We had a glorious time on the island of Ibiza! But, by then, neither one of us had any money. Then we met a wealthy guy named David from New York. He enjoyed our company and generously covered all of our needs for the next few weeks and eventually covered the cost of our boat trip back to Barcelona. Amber and I continued on without any money. We spent nights cuddling together in my warm army sleeping bag. We hitchhiked all around Spain, all over France and eventually ended up at her parents house in Belgium. They were incredibly loving, supportive, and generous people. Amber and I lived at their home for two months and I got a job at a local army base packing groceries at a military commissary. I would take the local train there and back each day. On the train I had the luxury of sharing my time with so many extraordinarily wonderful Belgium people!

We had stayed in contact with David in New York and he offered to pay our way back to America and said we could stay with him in New York, in Greenwich Village. So, we left for New York City. I soon got a job as a machinist in Manhattan. One day, when I went to get paid, the manager stopped me and said, we have to let you go. "WOW, why?" I said. His reply was, "You do great work but you are always whistling and you're so happy and bubbly. This will affect all of the other

workers and that doesn't work for them. Gosh, thank you.” That was for sure a first for me. It had all seemed to be going great in New York until now, and then, one day, Amber said she wanted to see her brother in California. David offered to pay her way to California to visit with her brother. Before I knew it this wonderful, beautiful girl, Amber, who I was in love with, was gone before I had even realized what had happened. The next day, the whole situation was made very clear to me. That night, David crawled into bed with me! He made his intentions very obvious! I immediately grabbed my few belongings, and in the middle of the night walked to the nearest freeway and stuck out my thumb. I was off again to experience whatever life had to offer, carrying in my heart the loss of another girl that I had fallen in love with; on my back my warm, military sleeping bag; and in memory another free spirited traveler's lesson learned.

My travels led me back to a place called Tinley Park outside of Chicago. I began working for a large ice cream vending company called ‘Jumbo Ice Cream Company’. I started out as an ice cream truck driver vendor out of the Tinley Park branch. Very soon, I noticed the awful condition of the trucks. Rather than complain, I asked the manager who the mechanic was? He asked me if I knew anything about being a mechanic. I replied in the affirmative and he replied, “Great, you are our mechanic.” So, as of that day I became the mechanic for their large fleet of trucks. I immediately set up a daily maintenance program, stocked a parts room and purchased the tools I would need. At night, when the trucks rolled in off the road, they all were serviced and one different part was checked each night. I would keep one truck in the lot to perform major repairs the next day. After a

few months they fired the manager and offered me the job. So, I began managing the branch as well as being the mechanic. With no pay increase! Nothing like being young and gullible!

That winter, when ice cream wasn't in demand and the branch shut down, I was transferred to the main headquarters in Detroit. There, we manufactured custom cooler boxes in their factory for all of the trucks for the different branches. That next spring, I went back to Tinley Park to open up for the season. The Company would hire workers from colleges in London. We housed them there on-site. After closing up the operation in the fall again that year I returned to Detroit. That winter I was assigned to set up a new branch in Elyria, Ohio. They gave me a one ton tow truck, way cool, with which to transfer the new fleet to Elyria. I would hook up to a vending truck in Detroit's main branch, tow it to the new location in Ohio, spend the night, drive back to Detroit, spend the night, get up, hook up to another truck and head back to Ohio. I did this until I had transported about 50 trucks along with a Mack Semi flatbed with a crane on it. When we opened up the business that spring I was the assistant manager and the mechanic. After a couple of months they fired the manager. Unfortunately, he was drunk all the time. He was a fun guy, but a lousy manager. I took over the entire branch, again, as the manager and the mechanic. Soon, I realized that I was now again doing all the work and getting a paltry salary. At the end of that season I left the company. I got a job as a machinist in a factory back near Chicago. That got extremely boring in no time at all. I definitely knew my way around the ice cream business; so I quit and started my own ice cream truck vending company. I was sure I'd do really great.

By this time I had rented a farm in a small farming town called Elwood. It was situated just three miles up the road from the largest bomb factory in America. It was a nice home with a really cool barn. I even bought a horse. My new girlfriend Linda (NO...not the same Linda who jilted me) and my friend Ray were staying there with me. It was here that I started the company. I sold ice cream from a manufacturer called Meadow Gold. They provided me with all of the refrigerated coolers I needed. I peddled their product all throughout the area. I kept all those coolers in my living room, in between the couches and chairs, behind the sofa, under the windows (with plants on top for ambience), even under the television. So, at night, after a hard day's work it was pretty handy-dandy to just reach over and snag whatever kind of ice cream or popsicle you liked. Linda, Ray and I, we ate a lot of ice cream that first summer.

I started out with one truck. I drove it every day for 30 days in a row through a neighborhood called 'Up on the Hill'. I accumulated enough money to buy two more trucks. The company was called Sweeney's Ice Cream Company. As soon as I had three trucks I immediately changed the name to Rasta Ice Cream Adventures; and over one weekend the three of us painted each truck a swirling pastiche of day-glo shapes and symbols, the American flag, a Mad Hatter, bursts of red on fields of green, tie dye popsicles and manic faces peering out from between the headlights. I wanted people to know that this was ice cream like they'd never, ever purchased before. I let Linda drive one truck.



I contacted my brother Baran in hopes he could come and join me and we would rekindle a brotherly love that we had been unable to share for so many years. The last time I had shared time with him was when I left to join the Navy. He was so young. I missed him so much! The day he arrived was truly a day that gives full meaning to love. After catching up on our lives we agreed he would drive one of my ice

cream trucks. He gave it a good try, but it became obvious that he had some problems that made it hard for him to handle cash and keep track of handling the transactions with the customers. We both agreed it was best that he go back to Chicago where he would have the support of our mother. Things there were going well for him. He had his own apartment. A job as a truck driver.

We talked regularly. It was extremely wonderful to have him back in my life. One day I got a call that changed my life forever. He was gone. Passed away. He was sitting at home after work watching tv one day. Had drank a couple beers. A friend of his had broken his leg and after getting it set and put in a cast, the doctor gave him some pain pills. He went over to share time with Baran. He apparently shared pain pills with Baran. When Baran went to bed, he never woke up. I will forever carry his love, gentleness, honest smile, and innocent naiveness in my heart! I cry whenever I think of him. My heart has a hole in it that can never be filled! I love you Baran!

Still, my trucks got a lot of attention, but not nearly as much attention as the soul and rock 'n roll we blasted from our speakers. No annoying Christmas songs in summer or tried-and-true American ditties...Hurrah for the Red White and Blue, Mary had a Little Lamb, Battle Hymn of the Republic, or the occasional Mozart melody...grating on the nerves of adults. No way. When my Rasta's trucks pulled into a neighborhood, playing the latest hits...I'll Be There; Monday, Monday; California Dreamin'; We can Work it Out; Ain't too Proud to Beg; Stop...in the Name of Love...BB King....Isaac Hayes...it was as if the Pied Piper's tunes had arrived and it brought whole families out to jive and dance in the street for what, today, we'd call a 'Pop-Up' event.

The Eden...At some point Ray took off and went to Colorado for a Festival where he met a stripper from Key West named Ramona Night. After the festival they took off and moved to Key West. One day he called me up and said, "YO!! Key West is super-way-out cool and you should come down." I retained my best truck. I took off for Key West. Leaving the farm and immediately selling my ice cream company. I left Linda with the farm and a whole bunch of hangers-on who lived there off the land and jumped in my truck, heading South for Florida.

Just North of the Florida border, near Jessup, Georgia, I picked up two hitchhikers. It was a blazing hot, humid day and that big metal-box truck was hot as an oven. We careening down Interstate 95, we passed over the St. Mary's River and the hitchhiker and his girlfriend spied an open field with a small pond. The young blonde grabbed the steering wheel and practically steered the truck completely off the freeway ending onto the shoulder of the road, while imploring me to pull over, "It's so dang hot...Let's get naked and cool off!" As soon as the truck came sliding to a stop I put it in park, we jumped out, hopped a ragged, wooden fence and as we raced across the field the hitchhiker and his girlfriend began stripping off their clothes and I joined them. We all shouted our relief, as our bodies, like hot steel, sizzled as we dove into the cool pond water. While we floated there, escaping the sun's blistering heat, each of them took one of my hands, he on the right, she on the left, and we floated with eyes closed as the psychedelic mushrooms we just ate kicked in.

Some time later, we found ourselves at the shore. I looked up and saw a Highway Patrol car, with lights flashing, parked behind my truck. So, we hung low back in the water until he'd left. On the way back up to the truck, we gathered our clothes and ran naked, over the fence and up to the highway. I remember clearly that sound of horns blaring from passing cars and receding into the distance. Inside the truck we each put on whatever clothes we'd gathered in our hands. I ended up in a tank top and a pair of bikini panties. The guy hitchhiker got up into the driver's seat and said he'd be happy to drive a while, seeing as I'd already done so many miles. I said, "Sure, you can drive...the 'shrooms have me so, way mellow."

"No problem, man. And you can screw my girlfriend 'cause I bang her all the time." And he drove off.

I looked over at his girlfriend. She had a really big smile. Believe me, I too had a huge smile! We spent many a mile majorly enjoying every inch of each other's bodies lingering on certain parts for hours!

It was a road trip that could fill a lifetime - full of hitchhikers, sex-capades, trespassing, illegal swimming; guitar music in the van; and an occasional unpleasant encounter with police officers. Still, we arrived in Key West in August of 1971. At that time it was still a really laid-back Ernest Hemingway kind of place. The still unnamed hitchhikers, names were never shared or needed, got out and we hugged and rubbed each other lovingly and off they went. Dang that was a ride I'd love to take again! I lived in my truck on the beach enjoying life, hanging out with Ray and enjoying sunset parties every night at the Sunset Lookout Point with a lot of really creative artistically wild people.

Eventually I met a man named Milton, I called him Milt. He was an older guy probably in his late 50s, kind of a large guy who looked and dressed pretty conservative: short hair, white long sleeve shirt and a sports coat, even on hot, humid Key West days. Definitely no ear rings. We started hanging out together and it turned out that he smoked pot and was a really cool dude. He owned a hotel right on the Gulf of Mexico in a town called Fort Walton Beach. He and his wife had just split up and he had moved to Key West to get away. He was living the life of a vagabond on his sailboat, the Eden. Soon, we made plans to take off and explore the world. I asked my friend Ray to join us. I also asked Linda, the girl I had lived with in the



farmhouse up in Elwood to come down and go sailing with us. A week later, we'd gotten what we figured we needed for the adventure and spent the night together in a small Cove near the Turtle Factory across from the lobster boat docks.

We left the next day and got well on our way to uncharted waters. The water was calm and it was a beautiful day. Off in the distance we could see the ominous signs of a storm. It wasn't very long before the seas started to kick up and the storm winds and rain started to pound us dangerously hard. The waves actually rose to between 15 - 20 ft. Ray was at the helm surfing the waves, It was insanely crazy! We were able to lash ourselves down, hang on and not get thrown around too severely, or worse, tossed overboard. We joked about asking Davy Jones to save a spot for us, in case things got too gnarly. At around midnight, it seemed like we were going to actually be okay and become true sailors until we started taking on water. Then it truly looked like for sure this was going to be the gruesome end of us, a testament to not being prepared and naively over confident. Somehow we managed to ride out the storm, and make our way back to Key West as fast as we could. We definitely decided we didn't want to check out the world after all. Linda said thanks but no thanks and took off immediately. Ray and I went back to enjoying life on the magical island. Milt Spent his time repairing the Eden, getting it seaworthy for his next sailing adventure without us. After a short period, Milt set sail for Fort Walton Beach which is in the panhandle of Florida where he owned the hotel directly on the Gulf of Mexico with its own docks.

The story of Eden now picks up quoting directly from Milt's yacht log:



EDEN LOG

Monday, February 12th 1973

Fueled up, Charlie left for Fort Walton Beach.
Underway 9:00 a.m. Nice weather- Heading 330 degrees
6:30 pm- Dropped anchor in bathtub water - ate - sleep
Tuesday, February 13th 1973

7:00 am- Arose to a nice day- Ate- Wind North East to East
Warmer!- Saw 2 porpoises- Set sails 7:45 a.m.

Wednesday, February 14th 1973

7:00 a.m.- Woke up so very tired of being tossed around foolishly.-
Little wind

4:45 pm- Sailed into Charlotte Harbor

Prepared for dinner in town

Sleep at last- \$6.80 a night for the slip

Thursday, February 15th 1973

Did the laundry-

Larry sailed down from Fort Walton Beach in an aqua cat 12 ft

Found a permanent dock space- Towed Eden to dock - Made fast all
lines - Called Garrett to inform him he could have Eden.

Friday, February 16th 1973

Woke up early stowing gear

Garrett joined us.

Hung out, Partied with four girls from shore, sweet,

Larry and I drank a lotta rum that night, Garrett abstained - Sleep.

Goodbye Eden! It has been a hell of an adventure.

I took off and moved back to Fort Walton Beach, I left the sailboat,
Eden, in Boca Grande near Tampa in Charlotte Harbor. I no longer
wanted it, understandably! Garrett called up Ray and invited him to
come join him to take the boat down to Key West. Good bye.

When I talked to Ray I was glad but not surprised he was up for another adventure on Eden. Ray is one wild and crazy-cool guy. I also contacted a girl I barely knew from my high school days, whose name was also Linda, (dang, another Linda) and asked her to join our adventure. One would think after the sailing disaster with Milt in Key West I would have learned not to invite a girl named Linda to go sailing. That turned out to be a rather stupid idea. I honestly really didn't know her very well, and had not seen her for many, many years. She had no experience at sea on a sailboat. She chain smoked cigarettes and was also very shy and timid. I'm not sure exactly why I thought it would be fun to have a girl along for the adventure that we planned would only take about three days. Honestly, it had more to do with sex than having a sailing-qualified crew mate. Even though not a moment of sex of any kind ever happened! It took Ray and I a couple days to repair the sails, get the boat ready, get the charts we needed, and provision a small amount of food and water. Then, it was, 'Hi ho, hi ho, it's off to sail we go'. We were off to Key West. We never checked the weather, or even if it was a favorable time of the year for sailing. We didn't have a VHF radio. No medical supplies. This was before cell phones. No way to communicate with anyone. And to be honest, we didn't even think about all these precautions we hadn't taken. Yeehaw!! Ah, sailing we will go!

DAY ONE. We left Boca Grande, saying goodbye to Charlotte Harbor and started heading out to the channel into the Gulf of Mexico, traveling past Gasparilla Island State Park off to starboard. Almost immediately the fog set in. It became so foggy we couldn't even see the water under the boat. So, we turned slightly out of the channel and

set the anchor. Because of the fog and being so dang close to the channel we had to ring the bell every 20 seconds so nobody would run into us, all night long. We spent the night with our lights on, for added security and ended up running all the batteries dead. Luckily, a fishing boat came by in the morning and took our batteries, charged them up and brought them back a little later that day. We thanked the sailing gods, for the first time, that morning!!

DAY TWO. With the fog having cleared, we set the sails, and were barely able to sail the rest of the way down the channel out into the Gulf Of Mexico, to head south along the coast of Florida. For the duration of the trip we would have Florida off the port side of the boat. Or so we thought. We enthusiastically tried to sail. Finding that less than effective. We were forced to rely on the old engine to make headway. We passed Cayo Costa State Park, and by nightfall we set anchor close off shore North of Captiva Island. We were Hoping to at least make Sanibel Island. We fell way short, It was a dang nice night out there on anchor! The sky was clear, no wind, calm seas. But unfortunately Linda was starting to get cabin fever. She was obviously not accustomed to being in such a small inclosed space. We were still optimistic. Ray was seriously having fun. I was very excited. We both assured Linda that we had everything under control. She told us she was beginning to have doubts.

DAY THREE. We upped the anchor indulging the humor of the wind. That sure was fun, but didn't get us anywhere. Back to the engine. Passed Sanibel Island. Here is where our 3 day adventure takes a dramatic turn. As we continued to head south, the coastline of Florida dramatically dropped off to the east. Like lots! Absolutely no more land in sight at all. Absolutely no way to set anchor or call for help and

No wind. No way to even know where we are. So hot it now has become literally unbearable. Our meager supply of food is dangerously low. We already are forced to ration our few tiny drops of water and the food that consists of a bag of cornmeal. We mixed a little water with it and made it into balls so we could ration them. That night we shut off the engine. Went to sleep. Floating around in the moonless calm night just like a wine bottle cork in a backyard swimming pool.

DAY FOUR. Waking up that morning, the instant our brains regained consciousness Linda let loose a chorus of screams. Her yelling and crying filled the boat and the empty sky with its booming reverberations. Ray and I sat watching her fall apart with a calm detachedness. I realized we were settling down into a state of sheer panic, fear, and an overwhelming sadness. If we were going to survive, Ray and I had to control our insanity. Then, Linda asked me, “How soon are we gonna get to shore?” because she had almost finished her last pack of cigarettes. “Or are we going to die out here?”

We were off motoring along again. Obviously, now all hopes for this to be a short, fun rewarding trip to Key West are inexplicably definitely not happening. Midday, Ray went down into the cabin where Linda was in a state of uncontrollable shaking shock, preparing to light her last cigarette. “**Oh no, I smell gas!**” he yelled, “**Don’t light that!!**” I immediately shut off the engine and the fuel tank line valve. Then went down into the cabin to help determine the source. We carefully and cautiously pulled up the flooring, and exposing the bilge, discovered 5 inches of highly explosive raw gasoline! Wow! Freak out city. We told Linda to very carefully tip toe out onto the cockpit to pray that we might see tomorrow. Ray and I were afraid of causing a spark.

Carefully Ray headed up to the cockpit. I took off my t-shirts, and very, very, very carefully started sponging up the gas out of the bilge, slowly handing it to Ray to squeeze out overboard. He then would hand it back. After much careful sponging with my saturated t-shirt and handing it to Ray to squeeze out. We finally got all of the gasoline out of the bilge. We didn't know if it would be safe to put the flooring back, or to begin the needed repairs to the fuel leak and restart the engine. So, I decided to put my automotive skills to the test. I had to determine the source of the leak. Although I was nearly passing out from the fumes I crawled down into the bilge to examine the engine. I figured out that the fuel pump must have been leaking.

Ray came back and we reinstalled the flooring and put the cabin back in order. Linda was still at the helm praying to stay alive. I was in the cabin with Ray and Linda was out in the cockpit. Ray went out into the cockpit. I said, "Okay Ray and Linda, are you ready?" I took a lighter out of my pocket. The sound of them gasping for air hurt my ears.

They gave me a big distorted twisted smile that revealed their inner shock, confusion, fear, and uncontrollable disbelief of this crucial moment in our lives . Their eyes were so big it looked like two cars coming at me full speed with their bright lights on, penetrating my inner soul.

We all closed our eyes. **I flicked my lighter**, I will never forget what that simple act ment for all of us! A short sweet click sound to rival all music, inspiring uplifting sounds, the birth of the universe and the first magnificent sound from a newborn baby and perhaps even the healing sound of nothing. The truly astonishing intense uncountable joy when I didn't blow ourselves up, and spread our bodies and Eden all over the Gulf of Mexico. Their faces instantaneously changed. Smiles got so big their cheeks squeezed their eyes closed and pulled

the skin up so tight on their chin you could see the minute details of the jaw bone. Linda peed her pants and began hysterically sobbing. Ray farted. I laughed so hard a waterfall streamed out of my eyes. It took some time to comprehend that astoundingly stunning short moment in an already challenging adventure to regain at least some sense of composure. Never ever again would our lives be the same! Now on with the chore of reestablishing our only hope of salvation. We took the gas tank out and installed it on the upper deck and ran the fuel line directly into the carburetor. Hallelujah, the engine started. and off we went. That night after shutting the engine off, we went to sleep, with the boat adrift. Our sleep consisted of periodic limb movements, abnormalities of the central nervous system, and dyssomnias. Not a good relaxing night sleep at all.

DAY FIVE. Now being at least 50 miles from any land, we are still motoring south. Perhaps we can now regain some hope that we will see land again. Then the smell of the engine starting to overheat whipped us right back into a devastating mental panic. Ray shut it down immediately. Upon inspection we discovered it was low on oil. And of course, we had not thought to stock up on oil, yet another oversight, definitely extremely stupid. Ray and I figured I could melt down a large can of Crisco lard we had, and put that into the engine. It worked like a charm. The temperature came down, and we continued throughout the day. Now heading east. We kind of believe we may be somewhere off the coast near Fort Myers and be able to pull into a harbor. We shut off the engine and went to spend the night floating in circles with the tide perhaps 20 miles of shore.

DAY SIX, SEVEN and EIGHT We got up in the morning to start the engine and motor into Fort Myers because again there was no wind to

do any sailing, keep in mind it was about 750 million degrees, so we were baking like little clams. To our sad realization the Crisco had firmed up in the engine and that was the last time it ever turned over. **DANG**, there went our only hopes of using our motor to get back to land. To be that close and have our motor seize up must mean it's finally close to total insanity. It was way too far to row in our dinghy. So now with no wind at all and no engine to power us all we could do is float around. For three days, we made very little headway south with the tides. At one point we saw a large yacht anchored off in the distance. Ray and I lowered the dinghy in the water, and rowed like Banshees trying to get to the boat. We got close enough to see the boat raise its anchor to take off. We tied our life jackets to the end of the oars, and waved them like crazy and screamed and yelled as loud as we could. We could actually see the guy off in the distance in the cabin driving away. He never looked our way. Ray turned to me, and said, as we sat there in the dinghy, on a hot misty afternoon,

“Garrett, do you think perhaps we are already dead?” We slowly rowed back to Eden, stowed away the dinghy on the cabin top, and resumed back to just floating along. A little yellow bird flew up and landed on my shoulder! Never ever has there been a bird to bring so much joy, in such a moment of complete bewilderment. We all sat motionless as the momentary gift caught its breath. It turned slowly and looked into my eyes for what seemed like an eternity. I think I heard it say, “Good luck!” Then it flew away!

DAY NINE. By this time we had run out of food, we were just about out of water. Linda had run out of cigarettes and was becoming totally insane. At one point she was down in the cabin and started screaming. When I looked down into the cabin she was literally pulling the hair out of her head. Blood covered her entire face. I ran down,

calling out her name, but she couldn't hear me. I walked toward her, fearful of the crazed look in her eyes and the banshee noises from her mouth. With a sudden jolt of movement she jumped at me, scratching and screaming. So, I slugged her, trying to bring her back around. She slumped down on the floor of the cabin, exhausted, whimpering as she fell into a much calmer state of insanity. I held her gently and cleaned the blood off of her face and did what I could to stop the bleeding constantly telling her WE WILL BE OK! She slowly started to calm down and stayed tightly clinging to me as I held her in my arms for the entire rest of the night. As of the next day pretty much after that she stayed down below in the cabin while Ray and I spent most of our time in the cockpit, in the full baking sun, Ray and I agreed we must do what we must do to keep some sort of grip on even a tiny glimmer of hope and something resembling sanity. I spent a lot of time with Linda sharing love and compassion and reassurance. I made sure she knew she was not alone and we are sincerely going to get us back to shore.

DAY TEN (Garrett). What luck will befall us now? It had now been 10 days since we left Charlotte Harbor, and we had passed Naples. We could see the light way off in the distance. The Everglades and the Ten Thousand Islands were what seemed like a trillion miles offshore in the north part of Florida Bay near Flamingo. The sea spoke liltily, as a wheel loosening at its hub, as lightning reached criss-cross across the sky dividing the rod, as when dark upon darker climbs into the blackest night's bed. When the strongest are robbed of breath and the breathless lay bare beneath it all. At that point the shoreline headed east, and we were beyond the mainland of Florida, in an area called Crocodile Hatchery. Years later, Ray said, perhaps at that point

it might have been our best choice to consider this to be a great place and time for all of us to go for a swim with the Crocodiles.

Ray and I were still somewhat barely sane at this point and Linda was doing so much better! I still gave her a lot of attention and support. We were just bopping around like a cork, no wind, no engine, no radio to call for help, no food, no land in sight, and barely enough water to wet our crusty cracked lips. It was only the three of us, the Eden, and the never ending excruciating humid heat. All of Time that creeps a petty pace toward gyres of infinite space behind this pale spoke of the calamity upon us; and I looked out upon the vast, withering expanse, that breathless, humid aching of it all that lay before the ship. Not a wind to fill a toy-boat sail; nor waves to rock asleep we murmuring crew all agog in the grand solitude afore, aft, starboard and port sides. It is beyond words trying to explain what we were feeling and what we were thinking, if we could even begin to think at all. The languishing heat pressed upon this little ship and its crew, adrift upon a senseless sea. What sense can be made of a senseless entity? How to gather up the riven pieces of existence and find each its proper coordinates?

DAY ELEVEN (Linda) Why the hell did Garrett even ask me to come on this hellish boat trip? He said it would be a leisurely fun memorable party trip down the coast to Key West. Now, we're stuck here in the middle of nowhere in the damn Gulf of Mexico. If I could only even see the sandy bottom below the boat. I should just get out and walk back to shore. Get some cigarettes, have a smoke, find a real man to screw and leave these two stupid asses to starve to death. Probably have to eat each other to survive. What's gonna happen to me, now? I've got the tremors. Need some nicotine. That bastard Garrett left a bloody welt on my face...what's that clump of hair on the floor? Mine? There's

a butt..Oh, no... just a filter to suck on. Mmmm. This stinking boat is too dank and miserably hot. No water. No cigarettes. No food. No engine. No wind. No radio. No effin' way I'm gonna live through this. What am I supposed to do? There's nowhere to go. Those two bozos don't understand me. They better not come back down here until there's good news because I have no idea what I'd do to them or myself if I see one of those stupid faces again even though Garrett did truly try to be my friend and tried to understand me.

DAY TWELVE (Ray)

I'm going to keep an even keel. Those two are gonna lose it, soon. Linda has already gone bonkers and Garrett's drifting into his own strange, happy headscape. Weird attitude. But, he is still a lot of fun to be with. Actually, I am enjoying the challenge and this chance to be out on the water. The boat and sails are still in great shape. If the wind picks up, we are on our way. This yacht is extremely fast under full sail. We could be in a harbor probably in 2 or 3 days max. Besides, someone could come by and help us at any time. I wish Garrett had invited a girl who could sing, tell jokes, and provide some sexual comfort rather than Linda. I should have bought a guitar and more joints and one of my girlfriends - or else, at least more cigarettes for Linda. In fact, I am already looking forward to more adventures on the Eden with Garrett.

DAY THIRTEEN. Sound carries through the water for incredible distances and the hull of the boat acts like an amplifier. Linda jumped out from below, "I can hear the sound of an engine," she screamed. But nothing was in sight except for the sky and the water. We anxiously scanned everywhere for any sign of a boat. Then, just beyond the southern horizon, Ray saw what appeared to be a small

stick going to the right, and then it would turn and come towards us, creating a moment of hope. Then it would turn again to the right, and overwhelming disappointment would come over us. It continued this pattern for a while driving our emotions to possibly exploding our hearts, eventually we could see the very top of a boat. It continued to go to the right, and then back again towards us as it crested the horizon, gradually the boat got larger, and larger. The fluctuation between the hope of the possibility of being rescued and the opportunity to actually make contact with another human being, and the disappointment of it turning away as it zigzagged many miles away from us, monumentally overwhelmed and shut down our brain capacity. Ray climbed all the way up the Mast with a mirror to try and signal. I took a bunch of rags and started a small smoky fire on the bow. Linda started waving a life jacket and screaming so loud I knew the boat captain could hear her as he was still miles away. Then the moment came that was, and forever will be a confirmation of why I will always believe in and hope for the best in life. A man was standing on the top of a very large fishing boat, heading straight towards us waving both arms like an angel flying down from heaven to save us. You would have had to experience what we did on this 13th day of our adventure in order to even begin to try and understand how we felt at that moment. It truly seriously is indescribable.

Ray scurried down the mast, I put out the fire, and Linda was still screaming. The boat pulled up alongside us. We were all yelling at the same time, thinking that we were actually saying things, but the words were all unintelligible crazy noises. The guy looked down on us, and said,

“Please calm down, I will help you.”

Uncontrollable tears of joy, hearts beating so hard, smiles so incredibly big! I am truly surprised we didn't melt into puddles. Linda

was screaming, CIGARETTES PLEASE! He reached in his pocket and threw a pack of cigarettes down onto our deck, Linda ran over and grabbed them. She didn't even light them, She just started eating them. We tied the boats together, and climbed up onto his huge boat. We tried to explain what was going on and what we had been through and when he looked at Linda with tobacco juice drooling out of her mouth and bare spots on her head that's all it took for him to understand. He opened up a large box full of ice, where the fish they caught were kept, it was full of ice and cold beer. "Grab as many as you would like," he said. We grabbed as many as we could carry. Guzzling them down as fast as we could. He grabbed Linda and started to clean her up, hugged her and brushed her hair. Ray and I went down into the main cabin, passing through the galley. He offered us all kinds of food. I looked into the main cabin where Gary was sitting on a bunk rolling a huge joint. He reached over and pushed an eight track into a player. Very loud music filled the entire boat. We knew then that we were not being hijacked and being hauled off to become slaves. Linda, in the arms of the captain, actually finally after 13 days had a little smile on her face. It was late evening as we secured the sailboat behind the fishing boat and set the automatic pilot to head for the island of Marathon. By now we all had calmed down enough to really start to enjoy ourselves and fully engage in many hours of heavy partying.

Ray and I went up on the upper helm with the Captain to get some fresh air and smoke a joint. Linda stayed below with Gary where she found "a **real** man she could screw" The captain turned on the huge bright spotlight and scanned around in front of us. Mighty lucky moment, because right in front of us was a small island. we were screaming along under Full Throttle. 800 miles an hour. The captain was barely able to crank the wheel hard to starbound, just barely

missing the island. We were so close I could have grabbed a coconut as we flew by.

Now wouldn't that have been so incredibly insane? After all we had been through, managing to stay alive and not kill each other or die from heat exhaustion or go down to hang out with Davy Jones. Instead of finally being rescued. At high-speed, full throttle, sailboat in tow behind. Smashing into a small island in Florida Bay! No Gilligan's island story here.

After re-engaging the autopilot Ray and I and the captain headed back down to the main cabin to join Gary and Linda who were now enjoying each other under the blankets. Everything on the decks and in the cabin, including us, had been violently tossed around. It didn't seem to bother Gary and Linda, it might have even enhanced their getting to know each other. With the music still blasting, we quickly straightened everything up enough to resume an even wilder party scene. Having just again avoided death. Popping lots more beer and lighting lots of joints. It made Mardi Gras look like a family picnic in the park. I was trying hard to accept the fact that the Captain actually knew what he was doing, so twice I asked him if he and I could go up to the helm to make sure everything was okay. He turned on the big spotlight and scanned around and checked the settings on the autopilot and assured me that everything was operating perfectly. The captain and I then returned to the main cabin where the music was blasting and Ray was drinking and smoking joints and dancing around like a crazy lunatic. Linda and Gary had finally joined him with big bright eyes and huge smiles. Eventually most everybody was laying around and passed out. With the first morning sun rays beaming through the portholes, the Captain, Ray and I, scurried up to the upper helm. Our eyeballs got as big as grandma's apple pie. Full speed, automatic pilot still on, sailboat in tow. We were heading straight down

the channel into the island of Marathon. Markers on the left, rock breakwall on the right. The Captain yelled for me and Ray to go immediately down to the stern of the boat and fend off the sailboat to keep it from smashing into the back of the fishing boat. The captain shut off the automatic pilot, threw the engines in reverse and leaned the fishing boat into the rock breakwall using it to help him slow down. The sailboat came flying up and Ray and I were able to push the bow enough so that the sailboat went flying right by us. When the tow line became taught the sailboat swung sideways and the stern of the fishing boat spun out away from the rock breaker wall.

Understandably it took us a few minutes to absorb what had just happened and how to deal with the consequences. Somehow magnificently there was no real damage to either boat. We tied the sailboat to the side of the fishing boat and continued down the channel to the fisherman's dock. After securing the lines, Linda jumped off the boat onto the dock like a frog hopping from rock to rock. and was gone, never to be seen or heard from again. I would assume that was probably the last time she ever got on a boat. I hope her hair grew back and she was somehow able to have a normal life and even maybe forgive me for even ever calling her. After thanking the captain in so many ways for all that he had done, he fueled up and headed back out in search of mackerel and kingfish. Ray and I spent the night on the sailboat.

We were told we could not under any circumstances stay there at the fisherman's dock where the fishing boats came to fuel and offload their catches. Very early the next morning Ray and I took off and tried to sail the boat, with a couple different attempts and very little wind, underneath the only place to cross from the Gulf Mexico to the Atlantic Ocean under Highway 1 that's high enough to allow sailboats under In the whole length of the keys. Remember, we have no engine at this

point, Nor were we familiar with the strong tides and current difference between the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean. The first two attempts found us bouncing off of the pilings, requiring us to abort our attempt until we were able to assess what it was going to take to make it out into the Atlantic Ocean. When the winds became barely strong enough from the proper direction, we raised all sails including the topsails of this sailboat. With the full confidence of thinking we knew what we were doing, we actually made it through to the other side. Now that's one way to have fun on a sunny Florida afternoon. We then sailed into Boot Key Bay and dropped anchor. I stayed there with Ray on the boat for two weeks. Before leaving I asked Ray, why didn't we turn back, or have one of the small fishing boats that helped in the first beginning days, tow us back to safety ? Ray said, **“BECAUSE WE WERE NAIVE AND STUPID! BUT WHAT AN ADVENTURE!”** I left and went up to Fort Walton Beach to join Milt at his hotel. He had decided to turn it into a shopping center. It consisted of the original 6 unit Motel. Lots of small quaint little cottages, a bar, restaurant overlooking the water, and a two-story Boat House. The lower half being where you could pull a boat in, and go up into the living space on the second floor overlooking the bay. On a dock that extended out into the bay.

His idea was for him and I to start our own separate company together and lease with the option to purchase some of the individual pieces of property. We started leasing and fixing up parts of his property with the agreement that if our businesses became profitable and were sold, the buyers would have the option to buy the property from him through our business arrangement. I started with the original Mansfield Motel. I got a motel license in our name, and used the front office to run the six motel units rentals. I also opened up a boutique thrift shop in the front office that I named, 'It'll Sell'.

Thrift with a Social Conscience



It'll Sell was located right on the old Shoreline Highway. Milt and I were unlikely cohorts and even more unlikely business partners. I was this long-haired hippy and he was a straight, clean-cut, undercover hippy with short hair in a polyester suit. We did, though, enjoy woofing down joints and searching for treasures. To stock the shop we'd go around in my Chevy EconoVan every weekend to all the yardsales. We filled our shop with the best second-hand goods that a pair of scavengers could find in Fort Walton Beach. We had a policy whereby every item, no matter how valuable and how cheap we got it, we'd

only charge twice what we paid. Most everything was a massive, monumental bargain. One young woman came in and found the perfect gift for her daughter's birthday. It was a \$200 Bose stereo system we got for \$10. And she walked out the door extremely happy to pay \$20. Our motto was, "It's not about money, it's about happiness...It'll Sell".

Next we took on the boathouse and the dock, and I moved into the boathouse. It was well off shore out in the bay, halfway down the dock. Super way more than a cool place to live! I then started in on the original owner's home, being the oldest original motel in the area, the original home had been closed down for many years with code violations. I set forth to repair and bring the building up to code so we could rent it out. Being a hippie, I was finding it very difficult to deal with the planning department. Being that they were all old conservative straight guys. I ended up letting my partner Milt deal with them. Upon completion we rented it out to a lady that opened up a live-in coin shop.

Ray left the sailboat down in Boot Key and came up to Fort Walton Beach. Beyond the boathouse and out of sight he and I built a restaurant. Sure did piss off the city fathers; here again I had Milt deal with them. Ray painted a huge incredible mural on the shoreside of the Boathouse. He was there for about 2 months, then went back to Eden in Boot Key. I started turning each of my motel rooms into small businesses to sell as an operational small business. There are lots and lots and lots of great stories about the time I spent in Fort Walton Beach. But I will end this part of the story for now, save it for my next book. Safe to say, everything was going so incredibly great. I was well on my way to becoming a business entrepreneur. As fate would have

it, a hurricane hit the Panhandle Coast and literally destroyed the entire area. Oh well, I started with \$1,000 and it sure was a lot of fun.

I didn't have any insurance, so, 'Hi, ho, hi, ho' it was time to return to Miami. I said goodbye to Milt and thanked him very much for the time we had spent together and for the friendship that we shared.

I moved to Coconut Grove, which back then was one of the coolest places. I called up Ray and suggested he and Eden come up to Coconut Grove. So I went down to Boot Key and he and I took Eden out into the Gulf Stream. The Gulf Stream flows north at four knots. At times we would tie a line to the stern of the Eden and around our waist. Put on goggles, jump in and float along over the reefs. When we got close to the channel going into Biscayne bay. Ray was able to flag down and convince an ocean tug boat towing a large barge to allow us to tie onto the barge and pull us into Biscayne bay. Once inside the bay we disconnected from the barge, waved a big thank you to the captain and sailed into the anchorage of Coconut Grove. We lived together in the sailboat Eden for years. Eventually, Ray broke his leg and moved ashore. What an incredible life experience. Hidden behind some small islands. With 125 other boats. Never having to wear any clothes. Rowing in and out to shore. When the police boat would come through the anchorage we would all dive into our boats like gophers when the fox came close. Eventually I sold my beloved double ended converted rescue surfboat. It had been decked over and schooner rigged, with large topsails, and a deep keel added. I then got a beautiful cute small custom hand built houseboat and anchored it out in the bay.

One beautiful Florida day I went to pick up my mail. There was a letter addressed to Mr Garrett Sweeny, from:

Freya
33 Langanberry Lane
Portsmouth England
PO6

I opened it. It started out with, **“Hello father. THIS IS YOUR DAUGHTER FREYA”**. My mom Lattie finally, after lots of searching, was able to locate you. She, one day hopes to again share magical moments with you!

The next book will pick up here in Coconut Grove with the many unbelievably exciting adventures of “Garrett”. I will elaborate on the day to day facts, emotions, feelings, expectations, disappointments, love and the lust for the excitement that life has to offer to a **FREE RANGE HUMAN. WITH MY DAUGHTER FREYA AND MY LOVE, LATTIE!** Remember, **SET YOUR SAILS, AND HEAD OUT FULL SPEED WITH AN OPEN HEART, NOT KNOWING WHERE YOU'RE HEADED. YOU WILL NOT ALWAYS KNOW WHERE YOU ARE, OR WHERE YOU ARE GOING. BUT YOU WILL ALWAYS BE FREE, AND ALWAYS HAVE AN EXCITING BREATHTAKING STORY TO TELL!**

Humbly Yours,
Garrett Sweeny
A Free Range Human - on a reveler's journey