

# *The Outlaws*

## *Volume II*

### *"The Mission"*

## Chapter One

Chuck didn't quite know how to respond to what Joanne had said until the Farto Brothers and Sam showed up. Then the answer came.



Very many months had passed since the outlaws had banded together. The group now totaled 41 people, if you counted Penny and Charlie. And I guess that you could say that the Guardians of The Federal Aviation Agency, Julian and Roger, could also be counted as members of the small outlaw group that frequented the farm.

One morning, Chuck walked into the kitchen appearing bit sullen with the hint of a scowl on his face.

Joanne had been up for a while and was sitting at the small, round kitchen table staring into her coffee cup which she always held with both hands when she pondered something. As Chuck entered the kitchen, still looking down at his waist trying to find the right hole in his belt in order to close his belt buckle while raising his head occasionally to look ahead as he went, not wanting to trip;

he looked at Joanne, winked and said, "What's up, orange blossom?"

"Thinking about you. That's what's up."

"What'd I do now?" Chuck was never sure.

"Nothing. It's what you didn't do. You didn't sleep. Were you having nightmares last night?"

"Not that I know of." said Chuck brightly, lying.

"Well, all you did was thrash and turn last night."

"Really. I'm sorry. Did I keep you up?"

"Most of the night. Is something bothering you?"

"Nope." Still lying.

Chuck walked over the counter and pulled the carafe from the coffee maker and was pouring a cup when Joanne silently appeared beside him and kissed him on the cheek. He smiled and put the carafe back then he turned to look at her. As he did, she lightly touched a finger to his forehead.

"Liar." she said pointing the finger at his head. "What's going on in there?" she asked.

"Nothing."

She fixed him with an unwavering stare, not smiling.

He broke. "Well, yes, I guess."

"You guess what?" asked Joanne.

"The guys." he said. "For months now, we've had a lot of fun, but I'm starting to think..."

"Go ahead."

"How long can we keep this up? I mean, we make a few jumps and then we sit around a fire drinking beer, cracking jokes and having farting contests. I'm starting to worry the dew's off the rose and some of the guys are getting stale and might be thinking about quitting."

"You knew that the day would come, didn't you?" Joanne said.

Chuck went on. "I guess. I mean, in some ways, it's really like the old days. The regular guys show up or they're already here, every week-end. Some come and go. But a few of the regulars are coming less and less frequently. It's like this little fantasy we are living has lost its fascination and some of them are giving up on it."

Joanne had gone back to the table and sat down. Chuck pulled out a chair and sat across from her, and he sipped his coffee. Neither one said anything for a few minutes. Then Joanne rose and walked over the kitchen sink and leaned against the counter looking intently out the window down the green slash of the small airstrip beyond.

Then she turned and asked Chuck *the* question. "Sweetheart, what keeps old people alive?"

Chuck looked at her and cocked his head a few degrees and, at first, said nothing. Then he leaned on the table with an elbow and rested his head against his hand, his index finger lay under his nose, pensively, and he said nothing. He wanted to crack a joke, but he knew that it was a serious question and he also knew she *already* knew the answer she wanted him to say. It was best not to try to be funny when Joanne was serious.

He said nothing for a few more seconds and was beginning to feel a little stupid that he didn't immediately have an answer for her. So, he decided to just give up.

"I give up. What?"

The answer was curt and said quietly.

"Purpose."



The question, the answer and any possible solution continued to preoccupy Chuck's thoughts as he finished his coffee and kissed Joanne before heading over to the hangar, where Buzz was half-napping lounging in his beach chair.

When Chuck got to the hangar, he grabbed a handful of rags, his creeper and a can of spray degreaser. Then he lay down on the creeper and pushed himself under the airplane and began cleaning its belly. A few hours passed as Chuck hummed a non-descript tune and one or two of the outlaws came to get coffee from the workbench pot. It was a slow, lazy morning. Buzz had fallen completely asleep and was snoring lightly. But suddenly, he sat straight up, and he looked down the road, listening.



The neon green 1967 Cadillac convertible flew down the sandy road towards the farm leaving high swirls of dry summer dust in its wake. As it neared the airstrip at approximately sixty miles an hour, the loud, repetitive tinny refrain of "Dixie" blared from the bull horn under the hood and more than made their presence known. It sounded as if The Dukes of Hazard themselves were coming down the road.

Buzz was the first to lay eyes on them, and he hollered to no one in particular, "That's them! I knew they'd show up."

Flat on his back, as if working on an automobile, Chuck pushed his creeper out from under the belly of the 180 where he had been most of the morning scrubbing with a rag; an open can of

solvent sat on the floor next to him as he attempted to clean away the dark brown burnt oil and exhaust stains from the white belly of the airplane.

Hearing the horn blaring, he pushed outward from the airplane and sat up, and he looked out the door of the hangar as the old Caddy slid to a stop in front of the hangar. The first thing he saw were two men sitting in the open convertible, both wearing gold Bell helmets. Buzz had stepped forward and was shaking the driver's hand, and in half a second, Buzz had thrown his head back in laughter.

Suddenly then, both doors of the Cadillac opened and out stepped the two men, fully suited up with all their parachute gear on and, it appeared, ready to jump. Each was wearing parachute gear straight out of the 1960's. Their backpacks were old Pioneer four pin containers dyed red with white polka dots spotted all over; their chest mounted reserves matched. They each wore French jump boots painted red and laced-up with white parachute cord. Atop each of their reserves was mounted an old fashioned gold bicycle horn with the red rubber bulb to squeeze to make the horn honk. Which they commenced to do with each step they took. It was if a clown car had just arrived in front of the hangar.

Chuck stood up from the creeper as both men, appearing to be somewhere in their sixties, walked into the hangar towards the airplane. The first, Joe Farto, walked up to the airplane's open door, leaned in and made as if he was searching for something; with his head thrust inside, he hollered, "Where's the driver?!" And he honked his horn over and over. "Where's the driver?!" he continued to yell while looking around, his hand held close to his face pretending to flip the imaginary ashes from an imaginary cigar while fluttering his eyebrows mimicking Groucho Marks. And he honked some more.

Buzz was in stitches and Chuck stood still, his mouth slightly agape, not knowing how to react. But Chuck did begin to feel his neck becoming flush.

The other man, Dean Farto, had gone to the back of the airplane and clambered up onto the fuselage just ahead of the vertical stabilizer and straddled it like he was riding a horse, and he was yelling "Giddy-up! Giddy-up!" while honking his horn repeatedly.

Chuck was at first shocked, then he instantly became angry and yelled, "Hey! Get the fuck off of my airplane!"

Dean grinned and quickly slid off and removed his helmet. Buzz had stepped up beside Chuck and said to him, "Easy. It's a well rehearsed act. They're not going to hurt anything."

By that time, both Joe and Dean had removed their helmets, stopped their honking and had dropped their gear on the ground; they stood next to one another in front of Chuck with their hands clasped at their chests as if in prayer, their heads lowered in mock repentance.

"Hope we didn't piss anybody off." said Joe lowly as Dean nodded in the affirmative while wearing a wide grin.

"Well..." answered Chuck, still pissed off.

Before Chuck could say anything else, Buzz quickly said, "Chuck, meet the Fabulous Flying Fartos." And Joe and Dean bowed deeply. "Or..." continued Buzz, "...depending what day it is, they might be "The Brothers Farto," or "The Flatulent Farto Brothers," or "The Flying Faro Twins," or any combination thereof."

And Buzz then added, "Damn, it's good to see you guys."

Joe put his hand out and as Buzz took it, he said, "It's been a while, huh, bro?"

Chuck, now standing with his feet planted as if ready for a fight with both his arms folded across his chest, stood by silently, just observing, still miffed at the way his airplane was treated, as Dean said, "Yeah, man, what's it been, ten years?"

Meanwhile, Joanne had appeared, just walking up from the house and she took a place next to Chuck with a quizzical look on her face attempting to understand what was going on. When Buzz spotted her, he turned and said, "Listen. Joe, Dean, this is Chuck and Joanne. They own the place and run things. Be nice."

Joe and Dean each smiled easily and bowed again in Chuck and Joanne's direction while simultaneously saying, "Nice to meet you!"

Chuck, a bit incredulous, said, "What's with the bow-ing?"

Buzz stepped in and answered, "They're airshow performers...sort of."

Chuck looked at Buzz with a question on his face, then he looked again at the brothers as Jose' ambled into the hangar and said, "Damn! That's one gaudy-ass car out there."

"Not just a car..." said Dean, "...it's an airport, too!" And he was serious.



Joe and Dean were actually the Hinson brothers from Decatur, Alabama. In the early Sixties, they made regular week-end trips down to a little weed-strewn airstrip just outside of Lucedale, Mississippi, to jump with a small band of early skydivers who called themselves "The Golden Ea-gles." After having made a few static line jumps with the Eagles, the most experienced club jumper, Rusty, decided that they were ready for their first free fall jump using a rented Cessna 170 from 7,200 feet.

With Rusty acting as jumpmaster, they all exited on the same pass and Rusty, a highly-experienced veteran of twenty-five jumps himself, watched in horror as the two brothers flailed at the air as if they were both experiencing epileptic fits until somewhere near 1,600 feet, when they each regained a semblance of stability and pulled their ripcords. Rusty had opened at 2,500 feet and then closed his eyes thinking that they would both die.

On the ground, Rusty, the so-called "Club Safety Officer," gave them each a brand new Para Gear log book with a blue paper cover, and using his own Parachute Club of America 'A' license number, signed them off, clearing them for more free fall. Certainly, they would have been stopped from jumping anywhere else, but it was the Sixties, after all.

Joe and Dean made many more trips down to Luce-dale between their jobs working for the Decatur Sewer and Gas Company on the week-days. They referred to them-selves then as "Sanitation Engineers," but in reality, they were "Grease Trap Technicians," another name for guys who crawled into restaurant grease traps and cleaned out the monthly wad of congealed fried food that blocked the city sewer lines.

Joe and Dean liked to think of themselves as twins, but they were born of the same mother and different fathers a year apart. Their mother, a chain smoking alcoholic, never bothered to correct them and neither one of them had ever seen their birth certificates.

In school, what little time they spent there, they were the class bullies. Their favorite grade school activity was finding the smallest child they could, one alone out on the fringes of the playground and then play "Hang Spit." The shakedown game was simple. Laughing like gleeful hyenas, first Joe would tackle and hold down the crying child who was begging for mercy - the brothers were both large children, each having repeated at least one grade - while Dean bent over the struggling child's face allowing a glistening, long thread of



spit mixed with phlegm to slowly extend downwards towards the screaming child's face, sucking it in and out just before it touched the victim's face.

The pinned child was sure that the dangling filament was battery acid, and it would surely sizzle and burn a gaping hole in the skin if it touched, and being convinced so, the victim would agree to anything. The object was always to intimidate so that the brother's later demands, mostly extortion for milk money, were fulfilled. By the time the Hinson brothers had reached the fifth grade, nearly the entire male population of West Decatur Elementary cleared the halls or hid in the bathroom when the brothers strode out to recess.

One day the game ended for good after knocking a fellow student to the ground, one who, unbeknownst to the brothers, had been taking Tae Kwon Do lessons after school. As Joe straddled and held the kid down by the shoulders, and while Dean was leaning over while working up a mouthful of slime, the boy, with all his might, forcefully brought a knee squarely up into his captor's groin sending Joe's hard skull directly into Dean's nose with an audible "wap!" As Dean's nose flattened and exploded in a spray of blood, Joe rolled off on to the ground clutching his privates and writhed in a fetal ball; the boy then sprung to his feet and delivered the imprint on the sole of one Keds to the stumbling Dean's face, and he staggered and fell to the ground dazed. "Hang Spit" ended right there that day. But it did not end the larcenous streak of the brothers. There was always a scam or a scheme in the works.

After becoming "skydivers," the pair quit their jobs, having saved just enough money to get there, and the two bought a \$100 Corvair with sufficient floorboard left in it that so that their feet didn't drag on the highway, and they departed Alabama for Florida. Key West, to be exact. They sought good weather, good fishing, beer and women. They were also certain, they would find work - what

they called "work" - there that would support their skydiving habit. The work would assuredly involve cannabis.



Once in the Keys, they made a bar called the Rainbow Parrot their new home. Shortly after getting to the island, they met a skydiver named Roger. They aspired to Roger's lifestyle. Roger was a Tommy Bartlett Water Show performer who jumped at the Wisconsin Dell during the summer and then spent his winter on Florida beaches. Roger, moving with the temperature, starting in the Tampa area and then slowly working his way down to the Keys at the height of winter, represented the zenith of fine living to the brothers.

Days, he spent his time sitting on the beach, smoking weed, drinking beer and weaving sun hats and hand bags made of palm fronds and selling them to the passing tourist beachgoers. Nights, Roger always seemed to be with a different, fine Florida girl while working as a Jimmy Buffett impersonator in any strip bar that he wished. Every bar in the Keys had a Buffett impersonator sitting next to a tip jar strumming a guitar and warbling and off-key rendition of "Margaritaville."

They tagged along with Roger for a few weeks as Roger tried to teach them how to build the Chickees that made him his real money. A Chickee is an umbrella-shaped, center pole structure about eight feet in diameter and ten foot high that is an in-demand item of the beachside hotels and rich homeowners along the coast where guests can sit in the shade and sip their drinks. Taking only a few days to build, a Chickee easily went for \$3,000. And the materials were free. Roger drove his van up to the Everglades and to south Miami after dark on a regular basis, where he illegally cut down cypress trees and shinnied up palms for their fronds. Once the cypress trunks were stripped of their bark, soaked with water and allowed to dry in the sun for a few weeks, the wood was

guaranteed to last seven or eight years in the salt air on the beaches.

But, in a short while, the sweaty, hard work of building the Chickees got to be too much for the brothers. Then one night, sitting at the bar of the Green Parrot, another of Key West's fine drinking establishments, Joe and Dean got into a conversation with a local that centered around a photo of Jimmy Buffet in his early days, one that hung on the wall behind the bartender.

In the photo, Buffet wore a white t-shirt with the words, "Where is Bum Farto?" Also pictured on the shirt was a paunchy, swarthy middle age man who looked vaguely of Spanish origin. Now, the fans of Buffett, the so-called "Parrot Heads," all knew the story behind the shirt Buffett wore. But the brothers had never of him or his tale.

Both the brothers thought the name "Farto" was hilarious, their sense of humor naturally gravitating to the implication of the moniker. But as they listened to the local's story of the illustrious Bum Farto, a plan began to hatch in Joe's mind, a plan which the brothers discussed far into the night after they wobbled back to the Corvair, intending to get some sleep with Joe stretched out across the front seats and Dean scrunched up in the back seat.



Joseph "Bum" Farto was a Key West luminary and legend. Born there in the Thirties, as a child he aspired to be a fireman, and he hung around the local firehouse day-in and day-out. His nickname, "Bum," came from the firemen who he was always begging to buy him ice cream. In time, he did become a fireman, and he rose through the ranks becoming the Fire Chief. A lover of heavy gold jewelry and lurid suits, he flamboyantly drove around the Keys in a neon green Cadillac convertible. A few years into his time as the Fire Chief, the local Naval base closed, and the Key's

population began to suffer financially as a result of the lost military revenue.

But that loss was soon replaced by a new source of cash, an import from Columbia - marijuana. There was so much of it being dumped in area waters to be picked up by smugglers that bales of it began washing up on Key beach-es. The errant bales were soon called "Square Grouper," grouper being a local favorite fish to eat. It became so ludi-crouslly easy to buy grass in the Keys that bumper stickers soon appeared urging fellow drivers to "Smoke Florida Sea-food."

Bum, like many others there, dabbled in the grass trade, selling small amounts to tourists for spending money. Then, the ease of moving drugs through the Keys attracted a new drug, cocaine. Soon, Bum was dealing both marijua-na and cocaine from his favorite bench just outside of the Firehouse. It wasn't long before the State of Florida and the Drug Enforcement Agency wanted to tighten things up and they swooped into the Keys with a task force to curtail the drug trade. Unfortunately, Bum made a deal with a un-dercover agent to trade some cocaine for a flashy gold watch. He was busted. The DEA decided that Bum would be of more use as an informant and he was flipped.

But, as things happen, the word soon got out that Bum was an informant, and the cartel running cocaine through the Keys decided to put Bum on ice. Bum got wind of it, and one day, with little explanation, he rented a car and headed up the road to Miami supposedly to meet a friend. He never returned. The only thing ever found of him was his burned out rental car in a south Miami neighbor-hood a few weeks later.

And like the search for, and the legend of, Amelia Ear-hart, Bum's disappearance stoked the fires of rumor and far-fetched tales among Key West residents about what may have happened to him. Those in supposed good authority said that he had fled to Spain

and assumed a different identity; some said he'd gone into the Witness Protection Program, but the DEA usually doesn't burn cars to cover their tracks. So, over time, Bum got to be one of the more storied characters who lived in Key West not unlike the writer, Earnest Hemingway, before him. Mostly, his name and story were good for selling t-shirts and beer glasses with his face imprinted on them, as the bar owners and gift shop purveyors talked up his story which got grander and bigger with every telling.

But the Hinson brothers having heard the tales, decided that a livelihood might lay within the legend and this is what they came up with:



Joe had flown enough hours over the years, paying for a lesson here and there, that he had soloed, but he had never actually taken a written exam or passed a check ride, however, he did fancy himself a pilot, and a damn good one at that. At least, that was the boast he offered nightly to any girl he figured that he might talk into a roll in the Corvair.

With that in mind, the two hatched a plan that contained a few elements. The first was that during the winter, emulating Roger, they would use what they had learned to make an income weaving hats and hand bags and building the occasional Chickee; all, of course, they would sell and build at deeply discounted prices. It mattered little that the Chickees that they subsequently built all fell apart within three months or so, and stood on the beaches and backyards looking like drooping, storm shredded umbrellas. By the time that happened, of course, Joe and Dean were nowhere to be found.

The second element was that they needed an airplane. Why? Simply put, during the summers, they were going into the air show business. Their plan was elaborate.

They would pass themselves off, mostly at small mid-western county fairs and out-of-the-way drag strips as the Fabulous Flying Fartos. Being so enamored of the name "Farto," they figured to build personas around it and weave a story that held them up as the sons of the famous Bum Farto.

And the story was that they were raising funds to continue the search and possible rescue of their father, who they were convinced was being held for ransom by Peruvian rebels high on the mountain of Pico Cristóbal Colón. Problem was, Pico Cristóbal Colón is in Columbia. But no one they ever told the tale to bothered to check that out. So they got away with it.

Here is how they envisioned that their plan would work for them. First, they would find the promoter of the small county fair or drag strip who would agree to pay them a small percentage of the gate for a day's performance. What would they perform for the promoter?

First, from the airplane they had yet to procure, Dean would make an American flag jump to open the event. Then, Joe would make "touch-and-go" landings with the airplane on a special pad they would make to fit their neon green Cadillac while the Cadillac, which they had yet to procure, raced down the drag strip, or if a drag strip wasn't available, a run, wide open, across an empty field would do. Then, because they had seen the movie, "Gypsy Moths," Dean would make a triple canopy cut-a-way jumps for the crowd while Joe circled him on the way down, while blowing volumes of white smoke from the airplane. Oh! They had great plans.

Meanwhile, the rest of their income would be derived from the sale of goods in a trailer that they would pull behind the Caddy, by a young pretty girl who would be persuaded that she would be introduced to a Hollywood producer that Dean knew; she would sell

t-shirts, mugs, pennants and a small book about their dad, Bum, that the brothers would self-publish, having hired a ghost writer to write it.

All of this, of course, would be an act to convince the crowds that they were raising funds to finance a search-and-rescue of their father. And because they were *from* Key West, the trailer would have a unique drop down door that exposed a pet alligator direct from the Everglades that would live in a special tank. And for those that purchased a ticket, the girl would open the door and allow spectators to ogle the reptile every hour for five minutes.

During canopy descents, Dean would jump with a lit cigar and would light and throw an assortment of firecrackers and small smoke bombs that they would stock up on when they passed through South Carolina.

Part of their pre-show story would always be that they had just returned from a European tour where they had jumped and flown for Kings and Queens. Trouble was, they weren't always up on who the actual king or queen of a given country might be.

These were just some of the plans the Farto Brothers envisioned for themselves during nights at the Green Parrot or while falling into alcohol-induced sleep in their respective beds in the Corvair. They couldn't afford the Motel Six *every* night.

The reality to come would be something else. And the first thing that they needed would be that neon green Cadillac convertible. Oh! And they would need an airplane, *of course*.



Chuck knew nothing of any of this before they showed up. Buzz had just said that he had a couple of friends who he thought might make great outlaws. And because it was Buzz who had said it, no one questioned the invitation. Soon the whole expanse of the

Brother's exploits would unfold and it would be more than Chuck or Joanne, or anyone else for that matter could believe. Or tolerate.

To be continued in Chapter Two...