

**My Brother Nick**

Written by Bill Taylor 2025  
[williamabtaylor@gmail.com](mailto:williamabtaylor@gmail.com)  
614-558-3741

To my wife Nan, daughters Bayly and Morgan – you’ve heard it all, seen a lot and encouraged me over the years even if you weren’t sure what I was doing. Thank you, I love you!

With love and respect to my extended family, friends, co-workers and my hometown of Perrysburg, Ohio. You’re the ones I wanted to share this story with. You have always been genuinely interested in Nick’s story, sometimes out of pity, most times just out of love. Without your place in my life, I would never have put this down on paper.

Special recognition and thanks to the medical and law enforcement professionals who helped me along the way. You always treated my requests and observations with respect and did your best to help me along my path.

Lastly, thank you to all the mostly unknown positive participants in Nick’s journey. For some of you, it may have been your job. For some of you, it was just acts of kindness. What you do, and what you did for my brother is respected and very much appreciated.

## **Introduction**

The letters were still coming. I would read a few of them before writing back so I had something to talk about in my response. In early 1999 my brother Nick (Sydney Wentworth Taylor) was saying that people were stealing from him and the hotel where he lived was behind it. My career was on firmer footing, I knew I had to do something. So I wrote Nick and told him I was coming to see him, to help him. He replied that he wouldn't be there. I told him I'd be there on Friday March 12th and I gave him details - what time I would arrive and how long I'd stay. I was not surprised Nick said he wouldn't be there, I knew he might be embarrassed or just cautious about seeing his baby brother who he last saw in the early 1970's. And I still remembered the time he wouldn't see my sister and me when we last tried to visit him in 1983. But off I went. I flew into Sacramento, California on Thursday March 11th, spent the night at my sister-in-law's home in Elk Grove, then early the next morning I borrowed her pickup truck and drove to the BART train station in Pleasant Hill. I parked, got on the train and made my way to the Graystone Hotel, 66 Geary Street, San Francisco, California. As my brother Nick promised, he was nowhere to be seen.

## **Family Story, Family Secrets**

My family just never talked about it - at least not to me. It wasn't hush-hush, it just wasn't mentioned. Syd (Sydney Wentworth Taylor III) and Connie (Elizabeth Elston Taylor) had six children, I was by far the youngest. Nearly 12 years younger than Ned (Edward Graham Taylor), 14 and 16 years younger than my sisters Molly (Mary LeConte Taylor) and Tracy (Tracy Taylor MacNichol), nearly 18 years younger than Nick. Their first child,

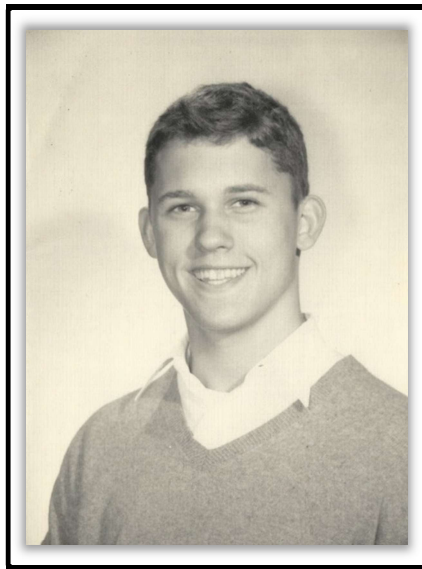
John, died at the age of one from unknown causes. Connie was 45 years old when I was born in 1957 at Flower Hospital in Toledo, Ohio.



*Taylor children circa 1960. From left Ned, Bill, Nick, Tracy and Molly*



*Nick and Molly circa 1967 or 1968*



*Nick high school picture*

Truth is, I didn't ask many questions. Not about Nick, not about John, not about my parents' divorce. My life was fantastic for the most part. I grew up as basically an only child, all my living siblings were out of the house by the time I was 11. Nick and Molly had moved to California, Ned moved to Arizona and my sister Tracy got married and lived in my hometown of Perrysburg, Ohio with her husband George and son Jeep.

Nick's circumstances in life were very difficult, he had been diagnosed paranoid schizophrenic when he was in his late teens. I understand from my family that his behavior before then was cause for some concern, but as he was graduating high school he was being diagnosed and headed into a life nobody would ever want. Not my parents, not any of his siblings or friends. In fact it was horrifying. Electric shock therapy, long stays in mental hospitals, a short stint in the Marines to "toughen him up". Pile on our parents' divorce, loss of the family home, death of my father, and financial challenges - it was all a recipe for a very troubled life.

He attended The Ohio State University for a quarter or two, I remember driving to Columbus, Ohio from Perrysburg once with my mother to see him. I remember being in Columbus and that Mother was swearing at all the one-way streets as she tried to navigate around town and I got car sick, which was a common occurrence. I remember it being mentioned that there was some connection to Jack Nicholas, the golfer, I don't know if Jack just happened to be on campus at the same time or if they might have been roommates at an off-campus house. I don't need to know.

Nick was 17 when I was born, my early memories are somewhat jumbled. I thought I remembered going to the Marine Corps Boot Camp in Parris Island to visit him when he was in the Marines - I did not. What I do remember is all his military clothes and duffle bags when he returned. I found out later he was discharged, not suitable for Marine life. I think it was honorable, but I don't really know. Nick told me about a training they had where they had to go into a gas-filled room and put on a gas mask to prevent being poisoned. His mask didn't fit. He told a similar story about being underwater and trying desperately to put on a scuba mask. The Marine Corps did not toughen him up. I can't say it made things worse, but it certainly did not help make them better. After Nick returned from the Marines I remember him having a job at a tomato processing plant outside Toledo.

There are some happy memories too, mainly around holidays. One Christmas Nick bought me (or maybe he bought it for himself) an AM radio kit. I remember us stringing a long antenna wire out a back 2nd floor bedroom window to make it work.

But as Nick's mental condition worsened, everyone in my family got further and further from him. We rarely talked about him. And family friends from my hometown stopped asking about him. Everyone knew but did not say anything. Part of that could have been to protect me, baby brother Bill. What I do know is that by the time I was in 5th grade we had moved out of one rental on Front Street and into another on Indiana Avenue. Nick was never at the Indiana Avenue house, he may have showed up at our next home on Louisiana Avenue once when I was in my early teens but I don't think so.

Looking back, the odds were stacked against all of us growing up. Our parents divorced when I was 3 or 4, I thought of my Daddy more like Santa Clause than a father. He had lost his job at Kaiser Willys Jeep, lived in Michigan for a while before moving back to California, his childhood home. When he'd come to visit, he'd show up at our Ohio house, take me for a haircut, then take me to Bargain City in Maumee to buy me something. In summer 1967 I spent 2 weeks with him in California, I remember it being a great time. But then he died suddenly in February 1968 at the age of 61. I had just turned 10, his last communication to me was a Happy Valentine's Day card - I can't remember if I received it in the mail before or after he died. Mother did not send me to California for his funeral; I've only heard abbreviated stories from my siblings. By all accounts, it was best that I wasn't there.

Tracy had gotten married to George MacNichol in 1965, had a son, Jeep, in 1966, and lived in Perrysburg a few miles from Mother and me. Nick moved to San Francisco sometime between 1967 and 1968 though I don't remember him being in California the summer I spent with my father. By 1969, my brother Ned had moved to Tucson, Arizona for college and Molly had moved to San Francisco for college and work.

Nick stayed in San Francisco after my father died and was receiving some level of psychiatric help but was unable to hold a job, barely able to take care of himself. His disease completely took over his life; for example, he referred to The Tonight Show's host as "John", Johnny Carson, and talked about how John spoke to him every night. Nick refused medications, quit seeing his doctors. In the early to mid-1970's Tracy traveled to San Francisco to try to help him. She successfully helped him get a room at The Graystone and got him qualified for Social Security Disability Income. I was not involved in any of that, but Tracy



and my aunt Graeme's efforts kept Nick as safe and secure as he possibly could be. What I do remember from that period is Nick calling our house; he was somewhere in San Francisco making collect calls to his mother in the middle of the night.

Mother, Connie Taylor, was a strong woman. She went back to college (she and my father graduated from University of California Berkeley) to get a teaching certificate so she could teach school in the higher-paying public school systems to take care of me. She did her student teaching at a Junior High for the Toledo Public Schools and landed a job teaching French, English (and sometimes Spanish) at Libbey High School. Connie and I lived together, just the two of us, from my 5th grade year until I graduated from Perrysburg High School in 1976.

Even though I didn't see him I witnessed and frequently participated in Nick's outbursts over the phone. He would make a collect call to our number and yell at my mother, most times in the middle of the night Eastern time. If I answered the phone he'd tell me I had to get Mother on the phone. After I agreed to accept the charges per the operator. Then I would witness a verbal battle. My mother was direct when she disagreed with you. She told you exactly what she thought. This had to be really tough, screaming at her mentally ill son who was screaming at her. I'm sure money was an issue, but there were many more. It was ugly. And my mother increasingly drank a lot until I was in high school when she seemed to tone it down. Less vodka, more beer.

The bigger family obstacles were a history of mental illness in the family (grandfather on my mother's side committed suicide, my mother's sister committed suicide right after she gave birth to my only 1st cousin, my sister Tracy battled with manic depression, later diagnosed as bipolar disorder). And then there

were addictions. My father was an alcoholic, so was my mother, my sister Tracy and my brother Ned.

But I was privileged in so many ways. I was a smart and active child. Despite flunking kindergarten the first time around I became a good student, an athlete and generally a good kid. Well, at least my friends' parents thought I was. My mother was a hugely positive influence, she was a voracious reader and a worldly woman. She had grown up in California, attended good schools, lived in France during the Great Depression. She spoke fluent French. My oldest sister Tracy married a respected businessman (20 years her senior) and always looked after her baby brother Bill; sometimes taking hurtful swipes at my more liberal mother's parenting style but genuinely interested in my well-being. Tracy was my grammar police, bought me my first tennis lessons and she and her husband George helped fund my first business when I graduated college. And as part of that, George bought me my first computer, an Apple IIe with 128k of RAM and a high quality daisy wheel printer. I went on to become a Chief Information Officer during my career, that computer started it all. That and a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from Colorado State University.

And then there were the kids I hung with and their parents. No, I didn't have a father "figure" in the house, but I had plenty of fathers interested in my well-being. Mr. Saunders, Mr. Hoffmann, Mr. Brown and my brother-in-law George were all there plus many more. None of them pretended to be my actual father but I watched them and did fun activities (and chores) with them and their sons. And I learned how to get away with all kinds of things without getting caught. If there was a fire, chances were that I helped start it. And I did get caught shoplifting once - you know, a normal American kid in the suburbs. I had one huge advantage -

I was good at school. Not necessarily smarter than anyone but a strong student.

## **Changing Relationships 1983-1984**

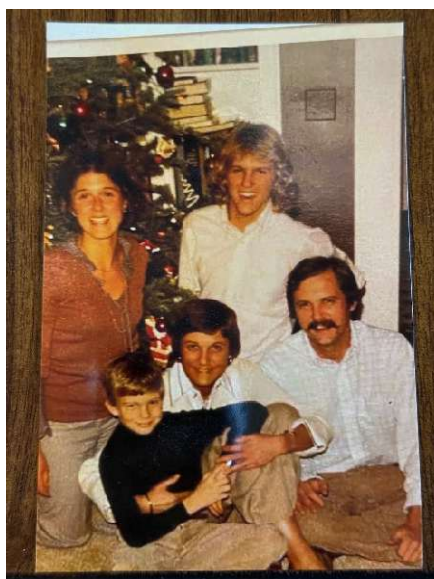
In 1983 Tracy reached out to me on behalf of our aunt, Graeme Taylor, my father's sister. Graeme lived in our grandparents' home in Berkeley, California. Graeme had handled any official affairs for Nick since Tracy's intervention in the early 1970's. Aunt Graeme was getting older and needed to hand that responsibility off. Tracy and Graeme thought I was a logical choice to take over this role and I agreed.

I was living in Fort Collins, Colorado where I graduated college in 1980, working as a newly licensed penny stockbroker. Nan (Nanette Fay Williams Taylor) and I were engaged to be married but I was just trying to figure out life (selling stocks was not it). I went out to California for an informal hand-over from my aunt and to try to connect with Nick. For the actual visit to see Nick, in the heart of San Francisco, my sister Molly showed up and accompanied me.

Molly had gotten married, moved out of San Francisco, and was living in Daly City California at that time. She and I went to Nick's residence at the Graystone Hotel, it was a dark, rainy San Francisco day. We somehow got up to his room (the front door to the hotel was typically locked) and knocked and called his name but no answer. We left, had a wonderful clam chowder lunch and returned. It was still a gray, bleak day but now it turned to something more horrifying. There was a strong odor of urine coming from the room so we were sure he was in there. We knocked and called his name but no answer. We were shaken, it was traumatic for both of us. Neither of us could imagine our brother, alone in his room, urinating in a bucket and hiding from

his siblings - who does that? We left San Francisco without seeing him, I flew back to Colorado. To this day I am so glad Molly accompanied me; it strengthened our relationship a hundred-fold.

Because of our age difference, and the fact Molly moved away when I was still in elementary school, we didn't have an especially close relationship. Over the years we had limited time together. One of those occasions was in 1973 while I was in high school, Molly surprised me, my mother and my brother Ned by showing up at Christmas time in Perrysburg for a fun surprise concocted by Molly and Tracy. Merry Christmas!



*Molly, Jeep, Tracy, Bill and Ned Christmas 1973*

After our failed attempt to see him, I started writing to Nick; that was how we communicated. What I got in return were hundreds of letters. Nick would sometimes write me 5 letters a day. Some long, some short, some postcards. I did the same thing my mother had done before me, I put them all in a box. Presumably in case he ever did something horrific and I needed proof that he was not stable. If I had asked him a question in one of my letters to him, I would read his letters over the following weeks to see if he answered me. But most of them were unopened, sitting in that box.

The United States Postal Service somehow knew to deliver those letters to me. My name would sometimes be legible, usually the zip code, but the envelopes and postcards were a mess. And the contents were all over the map, the parts I could read. Telling stories, drawing pictures, screaming but in print form. The one thing I don't recall is him threatening suicide. His letters to my mother often contained the threat to kill himself, typically by jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge. There is a family connection to the Bridge, my grandfather Taylor was the Consulting Traffic Engineer. His name is emblazoned on the plaque on the San Francisco pier side of the Golden Gate Bridge. But Nick treated me differently, I was his baby brother. I didn't have any of the baggage my other family members had. I wasn't aware of any of this when I was little.

I never told Nick I was getting married in 1984. In fact, I didn't tell him anything about my personal life. No one told me not to; it was obvious that any presence by Nick at our wedding was guaranteed to ruin the ceremony.

## Later 80's, 90's

After our adventure looking for Nick in 1983-1984 Molly and I saw each other a little more frequently. Later in 1983 Molly and her husband Jeff came to Fort Collins for our mother's 70th birthday party that I threw. They were also at Nan and my wedding in 1984.

In early 1987 Nan and I moved to Vienna, Virginia in the Washington, DC area where I'd gotten a new job. Basically, a fresh start after many years struggling to find the right employment in Colorado. In December 1987, just after I turned 30, Mother passed away in Tucson, Arizona where she'd moved to be near my brother Ned and his wife Liz after I left Colorado. Sadly, now both my parents were gone. We siblings spoke; I needed to tell Nick. I had always sent Nick updated addresses as I moved from multiple addresses in Colorado to Virginia. Nick continued to send letters and postcards, I'd write back sporadically. But now I needed to tell him our mother had died.

I sent the letter and he replied that he didn't believe me. The topic kept coming up in his flow of correspondence, I didn't have much response. I may have sent him her death certificate, I don't believe I ever did. Eventually he stopped bringing it up.

My career was improving, then in 1989 the Loma Prieta earthquake hit San Francisco and I was increasingly worried about Nick. He kept writing so I knew he was alive. Not knowing what to do, I sent him an emergency kit so at least he'd have a trustworthy flashlight, blankets and such. I also sent him money - money orders mostly but some personal checks that he never cashed.

My family moved to Manassas, Virginia in 1991 before moving to Columbus, Ohio in 1994. I never let Nick know he had nieces; our two daughters were born in 1988 (Bayly Elizabeth) and 1993 (Morgan Kay) in Fairfax, Virginia.

Then tragedy, in April 1996 my oldest sister Tracy killed herself. It was a tragedy that didn't really surprise us. Tracy had been diagnosed as bipolar and had a bad drinking problem. She tried her best to kill herself with alcohol, she finally did it with a gun. By this time Ned, Molly and I referred to ourselves as the "Mighty 600": a macabre reference to our parents having 3 of 5 kids who escaped serious mental health conditions. Syd and Connie batted .600, hence our moniker. I wrote Nick to tell him Tracy had passed; again he didn't believe me.

By 1997 I had a new job in Columbus, Ohio with the State of Ohio. I had made a few more trips to San Francisco over the years, each time going to the Graystone Hotel. I didn't try to go inside again, I still had bad memories from the 1983 visit with Molly. But whenever I was there I was always on the lookout for my brother Nick on the streets..

But all that changed in 1999 when Nick was writing that people were stealing from him.

## **1999 Notes and Recollections**

I opened this story, My Brother Nick, with a brief introduction of events that happened in March of 1999 - Nick told me the people who ran the hotel he lived in were stealing from him. My recollections of my subsequent trip are much clearer than my early life with Nick, partly because I wrote down many of the things that happened. I captured quite a bit, even created a map, so I could recall what happened later.

**Friday March 12, 1999**

I arrived in San Francisco at approximately 9:00 AM on a BART train from Pleasant Hill. I got off at Embarcadero Center, and headed up Market Street. After a block I asked someone where Geary Street was and I followed his instructions up Market. I got to the corner of Market and Kearney and asked again — I was standing at the corner where Geary, Kearney and Market came together. I walked up the sidewalk and noticed the bus stop. I figured Nick must use this stop. The place looked quite different than I remembered — a little nicer, not a lot nicer, it was a beautiful California day. There were a lot of street people around and I was on high alert looking for Nick.

Two weeks before, I had sent him a letter telling him I was going to be in San Francisco and I'd like to see him. I'd said I'd arrive late morning and, if he wasn't there, I'd only stay 2 hours waiting. Before I left for San Francisco I received at least 3 letters or cards saying he would not be there. Nick wrote that he'd be on the bus and that he didn't mean to be rude. The closer I got to my departure the crazier his letters appeared.

Outside the Graystone I began asking people who went in or came out if they knew my brother — none did. I described him as being about 6 feet tall with gray hair. I also said he had lived there a long time. Still nobody said they knew him. After an hour I finally went in. The first thing I noticed was that it wasn't as nasty as I remembered it being. Not nice by any stretch, but not as awful as I recalled. The entrance led directly to a flight of stairs going up. I climbed, noticing the recent installation of steel supports in the walls — apparently they were installed after the earthquake for stability. The office on the second floor was closed so I rang the doorbell. Finally a woman opened the screen. I



asked which room my brother Sydney lived in. She looked perplexed but eventually showed me a card with the name Sydney Taylor, 603. I thanked her and started climbing the stairs. The building has large skylights which make it very bright on this sunny day. The building has a central atrium and the rooms are arranged in circles on the perimeter with the hallways and handrail overlooking the atrium.

I saw a few people as I moved through the building — mostly shady looking characters. I had seen a guy out front with a bike who looked fairly normal— I had asked him if he knew my brother and he did not. I saw him again inside but didn't talk to him.

Finally I made it to the 6th floor and found room 603 opposite the side with the staircases. The door had a doorknob and a keyed deadbolt. I knocked and got no response. There was a very strong odor coming from the room — urine and who knows what. It was obvious Nick wasn't there so I went back to the office. The woman was still there so I asked if I could leave him a message. She gave me a torn-in-half envelope and I wrote a note to Nick saying I had been there. After I finished I handed the note back to her. As I was glancing around I saw a note explaining that the City Building Inspector would be there on the 12th, today, at noon and that the residents should be there to show them their rooms. I went back downstairs and stepped outside.

I talked with a street person who had come out of the building. I kind of explained that I was looking for my brother — he didn't know him. I told him that Nick had said someone was stealing from him. This guy said he didn't live there but that he'd been in there before and his wallet came up missing. Several weeks later he said he'd found his wallet in a room undergoing construction

— the only ones allowed in there were the owners. He suspected the building managers of stealing from the residents.

After thinking for a bit I decided that the managers may indeed be stealing from my brother. I decided that the building inspectors might give me a way into the building and maybe could help me out. The time was now about 10:00. I called Molly from a pay phone and told her to contact Aunt Graeme to tell her that I might not make it to her place until later. Then I waited. It didn't take long before the inspector arrived. I walked over to the car and two guys got out. As they were walking toward the Graystone I asked if they were inspecting the Graystone today - they said yes. I explained that my brother lived there and that I was concerned about his well being. I asked if I could accompany them. They didn't like the idea but finally agreed that I could go ahead of them or behind them. I told them my brother's room number. All three of us entered the building and I went ahead.

I went right past the 2nd floor office and up the stairs. When I got to the 3rd or 4th floor I saw a younger man coming out of (or going into) a room. He asked what I was doing. I asked if he was the manager — he said yes. I told him I was looking for my brother Sydney. He looked surprised, then said my brother needs a lot of help. He told me that he lived in 603 — I told him I knew that, that I'd been up there earlier. He asked if I'd like to see his room, kind of in a way to show me how much help my brother needed. He introduced himself as BP, he was Asian Indian. We went up the stairs and BP started explaining my brother and his life. Nick leaves at all hours, drinks all the time, passes out on the street, urinates on himself, and has diarrhea. He opened up Nick's room and I saw and smelled the most disgusting room I've ever seen. The odor of urine and feces were overwhelming. BP said he

has changed Nick's mattress several times because of its condition.

To describe this room is difficult, physically and emotionally. I didn't put a foot into the room but I could see most of it from the door. It's probably 8 feet wide by 6 feet long. The only window is on the far wall, closed, with styrofoam cups hanging off each side of the window frame. BP said Nick refuses to open the window even though it cannot be accessed from the outside - Nick is afraid people will enter his room through it. The bed is on the left sandwiched between the front and rear walls. It is covered in stained blankets and piles of clothes and junk and paper and plastic bottles. The walls are covered with Nick's drawings and writings plus several pictures of naked men. I could see opened cans of soup and food under the bed. BP explained that Nick brings back bags of garbage and tries to bring them up to his room — BP tries to keep it out. The smell was something I'll spend the rest of my life trying to forget, a combination of human body odors, urine, feces and garbage beyond anything I'd ever smelt before. There were a few flies. I said I'd seen enough and BP closed the door and we walked downstairs. When we got to the first floor we saw the guy with the bicycle, later introduced to me as Tora. BP told him that I was there to find out about Sydney. The guy still didn't recognize the name, then BP said “you know, the smelly guy”. Instantly Tora knew who we were talking about. My brother had been reduced to being known by his complete lack of hygiene, it was difficult to hear, even harder to wrap my head around.

We engaged in a conversation about Nick. I told them that Nick was writing saying that someone was stealing from him. They both told me that as long as Nick is in the Graystone Hotel he is safe. But as soon as he's out with the street people there's no

helping him. They described Nick's usual behavior. He leaves the Graystone sometimes as early as 6:00 AM and is gone most days to places unknown. He returns and drinks, oftentimes ending up in the street urinating on himself. He sleeps in various locations, the night before in a stairway at the back of the hotel. He doesn't socialize with anyone and has a terrible temper. Most of the time he just keeps to himself. When he returns at night there are a lot of complaints of Nick talking to himself all night in his room. BP and Tora agreed that Nick's problems are not solved at all by money — he has money and just uses it to buy alcohol.

BP invited me into the office where he gave me a Coke. We talked and I noticed some kids' toys. I asked if he had children, he told me a 6-year-old and a 2-½-year-old. He told me his wife was killed a year and a half ago by a car turning the corner in front of the hotel going 55 mph. The woman I spoke to earlier appears to be BP's sister, though I wasn't certain of his answer when I asked. I gave him my home phone number and address so he could reach me if there were any problems with Nick. I told him that I couldn't really help Nick unless I had a chance to see him and earn his trust. BP and I exchanged phone numbers — he told me to call him before I came down so he could tell me if Nick was there or not.

He accompanied me downstairs to the street where I prepared to say goodbye. He asked me if he could buy me lunch. I said no but he insisted. We went into the China Express restaurant, which is in the Graystone building. BP told me to order what I like. I got my food and sat down — no money changed hands; it must be an arrangement between the hotel and the restaurant. I ate by myself and BP left then returned. We really didn't talk and when I was done I left. I took the train back to the station, got in the pickup truck and drove to my aunt Graeme's home in Berkeley. I told

her, pretty bluntly, what I'd seen and learned. I was not blunt because I was trying to hurt her, I just wanted her to know exactly what the situation was. In retrospect, I could have toned it down a notch, it was a lot for anyone to hear, especially an elderly woman. My aunt didn't have much to say other than express her sympathies for my brother.

Later that night, back at my hotel in Pleasant Hill, I spoke with Nan and Molly. I told them what had happened and that I really wanted to see Nick. I wasn't sure exactly how I was going to do that. BP told me the best time to catch Nick was at night — there was no way in hell I was going to that part of town at night. The other possibility was early in the morning.

### **Saturday March 13, 1999**

I woke up in my hotel at 5:00 AM, my body was still on Eastern time. I couldn't get back to sleep so I immediately decided I would try to see Nick that morning. I quickly took a shower then got in the truck and drove to the BART station. The lot was nearly empty so I pulled up front and walked in. I put my card in, and rode the escalator to the platform — I had no idea what the schedule for trains going to SF was. I looked at the schedule map on the platform - the first train was due at 6:14 and it was now 6:05. Perfect. The train arrived on time and I took it to the Montgomery Street station — within two blocks of the Graystone.

The streets were very eerie at this time of day on a Saturday. During the workweek the street people intermixed with workers and tourists coming and going. On an early Saturday morning all I could see was street people. There was a drunk, thirtyish-looking guy staggering on my side of the sidewalk headed toward me. He kind of fell to the ground close to the building, trying to

sit down. I was very uncomfortable and moved quickly by him. I walked by the Graystone and looked in quickly — there was no motion. It was almost 7:00 AM.

I am not the most streetwise suburban kid but knowing enough about the neighborhood Nick lived in, I wore running shoes. I didn't have a weapon to protect me but I've always been pretty good with my wits and my speed. I can run fast and far when shit goes sideways.

I walked down to the corner and checked the situation out. I hung out, not knowing what to do. I was hungry because I hadn't had time to eat. I walked past the China Express and noticed they opened at 7:30 for breakfast. There was a Rite-Aid drug store truck across the street making a delivery. The truck was well into the road and there were several people unloading it. I hung out in front of the China Express, keeping back in case Nick was looking for me. At 7:30 I decided to go into the restaurant and eat.

While I ate breakfast I positioned myself at the window so I could watch the entrance to the Graystone. Nothing. The restaurant was cold, San Francisco cold, and I just sat and watched. Finally I did start to see a few people go in the hotel, none of whom I remembered from the day before. I took my coffee, went outside and decided to take a look from the other side of Geary Street. As I stood there watching, trying to decide what to do and how long to stay, I noticed a man on the opposite sidewalk quickly walking toward the Graystone from my left. I watched him walk for about 10 yards and I knew it was Nick; the Taylors walk fast and we all have a similar gait. He was wearing tan pants, a gray sweater and carrying a white plastic grocery bag. He was moving fast and soon approached the Graystone

where he opened the door and walked in. I was already moving across the street as the door was closing behind him.

I wasn't really thinking at all, just hurrying to catch him. As I caught the door and entered the hotel I saw him about two thirds of the way up the stairs. I called out 'Nick'. He made some kind of noise but kept on going. I called out "Nick" again and he stopped and turned. He started saying he had an appointment to get to and while he spoke I called out "It's Bill". He stopped rambling and asked if it was Bill. I replied yes and he said something like "Ok, if it's Bill, come on up to my room". I walked up the stairs to where he was and we walked together up to room 603.

On the walk up the stairs a million thoughts crossed my mind — mostly, "what the hell am I doing?" I didn't know what to expect or what to say or what to do. Nick was talking, sort of apologizing for the hotel, but not really. We got to his room and as he opened the door I got a good look at him. He smelled worse than his room. The tan pants were stained all over. He had black/gray socks with holes and a pair of dark deck tennis shoes with holes. Nick wore a couple of layers of clothes, all of which were extremely filthy and torn. His hair was white with dirt in it, shaggy cut in a typical male cut to about earlobe length. He had a white beard, the result of never shaving, not of some attempt to grow one. Nick's fingernails were black and his skin was fairly dark, the result of the California sun and lack of cleaning.

When I looked at his face I saw my Mother, my brother and my sisters. Nick has blue eyes, like me and my father, his genealogy is unmistakable. Then I saw his teeth. Where there once were white, aligned teeth there were now only a few rotten, yellow and black sticks. His lower centrals were all gone; you

could see the roots and plaque on either side of the big gap. He had some upper teeth but they were worse than the lowers. I have never seen anything as disgusting in my life. I remembered Molly and our horror when we smelled urine coming from the room back in 1983 but this was far beyond that. Here was my oldest brother with the worst hygiene of any street person I've ever encountered.

Nick opened his room, talking all the while. He pulled out a 16 oz. beer bottle from his bag, then a styrofoam cup. This cup looked worse than his attire. He fidgeted and began to pour himself a drink. The beer was obviously from a trash can. As we talked Nick opened the beer and poured it into the cup.

Our conversation here was like several we had that day. Nick just kind of went from topic to topic. I told him it was great to see him and asked him specifically what I could do to help him — he never really addressed my question. He is hooked on Perrysburg and our house at 438 East Front Street. He constantly brings up Maumee Valley Country Day School where he and my older siblings went to school. He only mentioned our relatives in passing. He said several times he wished for a million dollars — I told him that money probably wouldn't solve his problems. I told him that he needed to take a bath or shower and clean himself up. He replied that the baths at the Graystone had poison oak in them and that he itches like crazy whenever he takes a bath.

Nick never looked me in the eyes, just going from one topic to another. He said he didn't play golf or tennis so he had no way of really entertaining people. He sat on the bed preparing and hurriedly drinking the beer. He had about 3 or 4 plastic soda bottles in his bag. One looked like it was filled with urine (later confirmed) and another with some coffee-looking stuff. Later that



day he poured the coffee mixture in with vodka for his usual cocktail.

He pointed to the pictures of the naked men saying “I don't really know why I have those pictures, they're disgusting”. He made no attempt to hide them and instead opened up a closet door opposite his bed which had more pictures, some with heterosexual couples. As he drank his beer I was getting a little uncomfortable so I asked if he'd like to go outside and take a walk. He finished his drink, talking all the while. He put on about 2 more disgusting sweaters over the ones he had already and we left his room. Nick stopped at the bathroom where he poured the contents of the urine bottle into the toilet. Then we walked downstairs to the street.

I told him to take me wherever he wanted to. We walked up Geary then crossed over to Market. After a few blocks Nick led me to an underground train station. I never realized that SF had two underground train systems, I was only familiar with the BART system. I didn't know how to work the machines or how much to pay — Nick has a pass. I finally figured out that a dollar would get me in so I put a dollar in and followed my brother. By now there were more people about and we were getting an occasional stare. Again, Nick's appearance and odor make him hard not to notice. People stayed clear of us and pretty much ignored us. Nick said he'd take me to see a house that looked like 438 East Front Street. We rode the underground for a while then got off at Church Street. There was a Safeway grocery store there and Nick mentioned that they had a poster of him and he was not allowed in the store. I asked why and he just kind of sing-songed his words around the topic.

All of Nick's talking was very animated and fairly cheerful. He calls himself Nicodemus, a play on his name to the biblical figure. He introduced me to birds and trees, “Mr. Tree, this is my brother Bill”. Nick has some very expressive mannerisms that remind me of all members of my family (we’re an expressive group!). He’d put the suffix “odemus” on many nouns if they were familiar to him, like “gate” is added to words denoting a scandal.

Expressions: “I am King and you are not”. Sudden cheery bursts “Hello, say hi to Nicodemus!”

Eventually we made it to a small carryout named Rossi's. Nick is a regular. They saw him coming and put out a pint of vodka - \$2.00. One of the owners looked at me and I said “I'm his brother”. He immediately lectured me that I needed to take my brother home and he needed help. I didn't respond and left with Nick. I was thinking “fuck you pal, this is Nick's home” But I did understand that customers like my brother are hard to deal with and not great for business. Living in the city. Nick mixed the vodka and his coffee-looking substance into the same disgusting styrofoam cup. We walked and walked around the Church St./Market Street area. It's obviously a predominantly homosexual neighborhood. Houses and streets are very well kept and everyone owns a dog. We saw gay bikers lining the street — like 20 or 30 of them with their Harleys, all clad in leather. Nick commented occasionally that he had no idea gay people lived there when he moved to SF back in the late 1960's. Nick called himself a eunuch, not really having sexual desires — I didn't pursue it further.

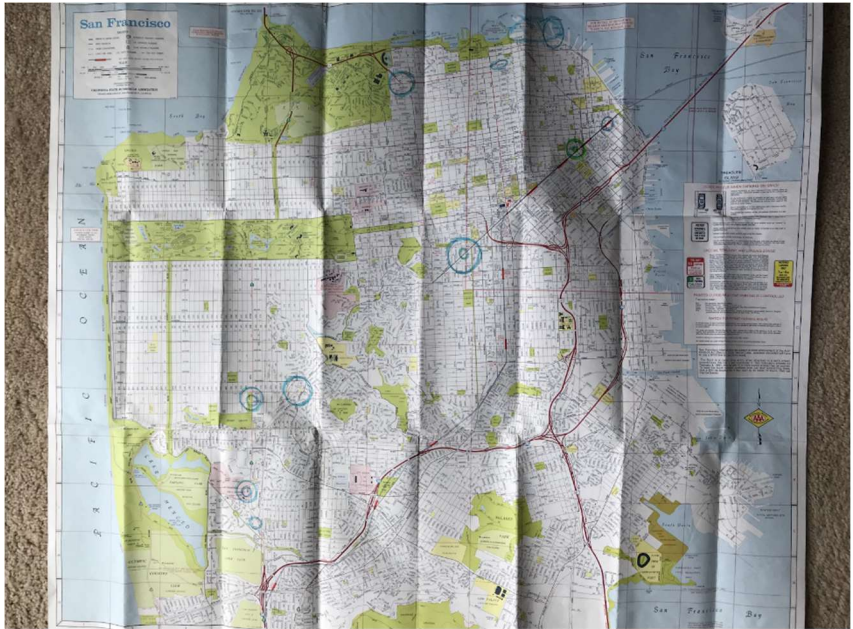
We finally came to the house that Nick thinks looks like our old house in Perrysburg. Not really. But it is a very nice house

with pretty trees and flowers. All the houses are very close together, a typical urban neighborhood. People we encountered on the streets pretty much ignored us. As we walked Nick drank his cocktail and the result was predictable — he was getting hammered, talking more and faster. Still pleasant. After some time I had to go to the bathroom. I had no idea how Nick dealt with this issue and I really didn't want to know. I stopped at a gas station but they said their bathroom was out of order — yeah right. Nick went behind some cars parked at the gas station to piss. He returned and said he didn't go. We walked on for about another 20 minutes or so and we found ourselves back near Market and Church (I think). There was a bus stop there. We sat on a bench and Nick retrieved a Real Estate magazine. He looked through the book commenting on the houses. He said he bet a Jewish couple lived there and so-and-so lived there. He talked about two of the real estate sales people whose pictures appeared in the magazine. “Tim and Valerie are very nice, they've made lots of money”. As the alcohol buzz began to wear off his tone began to change and he started getting mean about these imaginary people. “He's not very smart and she's no good at all”. Not exactly that but something that cut them down to size. After some time we got up and began to walk around the bus stop area a little bit. There were quite a few people there by now. The next thing I knew, Nick unzipped his pants and started pissing on a tree right there in front of people. I turned away just kind of freaking out but not knowing what to do — I ignored it. He half pissed on himself finishing up then just went about his business. Shit. I guess I wasn't surprised but I had no idea how to react in front of strangers. I'm pretty sure I just hid my emotions and looked matter-of-factly.

We got on a train from there and rode to another area.

## My Notes Ended

After I wrote that last sentence, “We got on a train from there and rode to another area”, the notes from the trip just stopped. A lot more happened, I just couldn’t articulate it anymore when I was writing it. I was emotionally spent. I’ve looked at these notes repeatedly over the years but every time I have made the decision not to continue. It was a very difficult day; I had nothing to add. And besides, as the years went by, what was the point? But I did mark up a map of the trip, it was created while I was writing my notes. These markups include some updates to the places we visited, here are my current recollections using the map as my guide.



*Marked up San Francisco city map, 1999*

Our route that day was generally in a clockwise circle starting from Geary Street and Union Square. We first traveled by foot and by underground MUNI southwest down Market Street from the Graystone Hotel, through the Tenderloin District, the Castro District, and various neighborhoods all the way to San Francisco State University. We then took above ground MUNI buses north and northeast to eventually get to Golden Gate Park, Lombard Street, Fisherman's Wharf and Pier 39.

We concluded our tour outside the Embarcadero BART station where I gave him a hug and said goodbye. That hug and goodbye is the last time I ever saw him. I got on the train and made my way back to my hotel. I immediately got in the shower to try to get the smell off me, but I couldn't. My brain was in overdrive trying to understand what had happened and what it meant. I must have called Nan, maybe Molly, I don't remember. I hadn't had enough water to drink on our walk, my legs were cramping as I tried to lay down and sleep.

Some further recollections, during our walk that day: we stopped at 3 liquor stores, Rossi's on Market Street (was a liquor store, now looks like it's something more) being the first and one on Lombard Street close to Fisherman's Warf being the last. We walked and utilized San Francisco's MUNI system, including buses and both above-ground and below-ground trains. We did not take a trolley that I recall.

One specific event stood out as the two of us - a disheveled homeless-looking, awful-smelling older man with a younger long-haired 40-year old wearing running shoes - traversed the city that day;. We had caught a bus somewhere between San Francisco State University and Golden Gate Park and got on

board. A group of 4-5 teenage boys were already on the bus, we sat across from them. Immediately they started screaming and swearing about the smell, trying to open the windows and get away from us. At this point I could have cared less, I was just happy not to be walking anymore. But I caught one of the kids quietly just kind of staring at us as the ride continued. We made eye contact - I can't remember if he mouthed something like "what is this all about" or if I could just read his mind. I mouthed to him "he's my brother". The kid nodded affirmatively, with a knowing expression that told me he understood. It was a powerful exchange between us, one of those things he might still remember.

Returning to Columbus, I wrote Nick shortly after my visit and then sent him a gift package for his 59th birthday on July 1st. In the letter I addressed some things that might help him, things I included in the gift package - lotion for his skin, eczema cream, new towels and sheets, and some money. I retrieved that letter from his room in February 2000 after what happened on December 2, 1999.

## **December 2, 1999**

On December 2, 1999 I received a call from a Social Worker named John Bailey with Community Health Network of San Francisco. John told me he was helping my brother Sydney get released from San Francisco General Hospital. Say what??? I had noticed that Nick hadn't been writing to me for a while, I didn't realize it had been months. John told me that Nick had been at San Francisco General for almost 3 months, they were treating him for a stab wound he had suffered that had gone gangrenous. John continued that my brother was anxious that he didn't have a

place to go back to, that the hotel must have kicked him out by now.

I told John to give me a moment, so that I could call the hotel and see what was up. I called the number I had for the hotel, the number had changed. I called the new number and spoke with BP. He told me my brother's room was still his but that he owed him a lot of money. I asked if his SSI checks were there, he said yes. I told BP that my brother was going to be coming back soon and that he'd pay the back rent once he deposited his checks. I then called John back with the news, he said he was in the process of finding new clothes for Nick and would put him in a taxi to the hotel shortly. I could hear Nick in the background but I did not speak to him directly.

I was emotional about him being injured, and that it took me so long to find out, but happy that I'd been able to contact BP and straighten the situation out. I held out hope that the hospital stay had helped him, not just physically but that he'd gotten back on some medications to treat his mental illness, that he was in much better condition than when I'd seen him in March. By nature, I'm an overly optimistic person.

## **Early 2000**

I didn't hear anything from BP, John or Nick for the rest of December. At work I was preparing for my new employer's response to Y2K. I was now the Information Technology Manager for a new State of Ohio agency, the Ohio School Facilities Commission. Our agency did not have much to worry about, we were a new agency that had modern systems that didn't rely on older COBOL systems with truncated date years. But all heads of IT for the State were on high alert because we interfaced with a lot of systems that would be exposed. New Years 2000

came and went with minimal issues; our preparations were successful.

As January rolled in, I became worried again about Nick - he hadn't written to me since he got out of the hospital. So I called BP. He told me Nick never showed up on December 2nd! What!?!? I'm now back to being suspicious of everyone, I called John Bailey who told me he had put Nick in the cab as promised with instructions to take my brother to 66 Geary Street. Nothing was turning up anything on my brother. So, on Saturday February 12, 2000 I again flew to Sacramento, got my sister-in-law's pickup truck and connected with my sister Molly. Off we went to start our investigation and find our brother, we started at the Graystone Hotel.

BP showed us Nick's room which looked very different than when I saw it nearly a year before. BP had cleaned it up with new sheets, and he had organized it, but most of Nick's things were in there just without all the styrofoam cups, pictures, trash, stink and flies. And he had all of Nick's uncashed SSI checks, which I took from him.

Molly and I retraced some of the landmarks that Nick and I had visited. The Safeway, the liquor stores, the bus stops. Nobody had seen him - or they didn't care or didn't want to say. On Monday, Valentine's Day 2000, we made our way to the San Francisco Police Department. We filed two missing persons reports, at two different precincts. We also went to Social Security and returned the uncashed SSI checks' we had gotten from BP - we didn't know what else to do with them. Returning them was slightly humorous, the local Social Security office was in Chinatown. It took a bit for us to communicate that we were returning checks, that our brother was missing and that if we



found him, we'd be back. We handed over the checks and never returned.

SAN FRANCISCO POLICE DEPARTMENT

INCIDENT REPORT NARRATIVE

INCIDENT NO. 000 / 84. 933

PAGE 3 OF 3

NARRATIVE:

On 2/14/00 the (R)eportee, Bill TAYLOR, responded to the office and reported his brother-Sydney W Taylor-missing.

Mr. Taylor said that he always receives mail from his brother. In late 1999 the letters stopped. After a couple of months Mr. Taylor came to San Francisco and located his brother in SFGH. Sydney had been admitted because of a serious infection to his upper left shoulder.

Sydney had been in SFGH since mid October-1999 and released on December 2, 1999. Since then Mr. Taylor had not received any mail from Sydney and was informed by the manager of the hotel where his brother lives-66 Geary BLVD-that his brother has not been seen since he was discharged from the hospital on December 2nd.

Sydney has been diagnosed as a Paranoid Schizophrenic. He has lived at the Geary BLVD address for 25 years. He has mentioned suicide in the distant past when communicating with his brother-Bill Taylor. Bill Taylor is the only member of the family that Sydney will communicate with and he always does so by mail. The family has no usable picture of Sydney. Mr. Taylor does not believe that Sydney has a Dentist as his teeth are very bad.

SFPD377F (6


*One of the two Missing Persons Reports we filed 2/14/2000*

After that trip we each returned to our respective homes and considered what our next actions might be. I talked to a co-worker in Ohio whose brother-in-law was a part-time detective and cab driver in San Francisco; he gave us some ideas. We called taxi companies to see what taxi might have picked him up, no luck. I created a flier that I sent to a long list of food kitchens in hopes he might be seen. No luck.

February 21, 2000


My Name is  
**Bill Taylor.**

A picture of me taken last year.




A picture of Nick and I when I was very small.

I'm looking for my brother,  
**Sydney Taylor,**  
known to his family as Nick.



A picture of Nick in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 1954.



I don't have a current photo of Nick, but he's 59 years old, 6 feet 1 inches tall, weighs approximately 190 lbs., has blue eyes with white hair, and maybe a white beard. I last saw Nick in March 1999 – he appears to be homeless by his manner of dress, but in fact he has a room at a hotel in the city of San Francisco. Nick has lived in the city for almost 30 years, at the same hotel for 25 years! Nick recently injured his upper left arm and spent 2 months at San Francisco General Hospital getting treatment. He was released on December 2, 1999 and hasn't been seen since.

Nick communicates with me by writing frequent letters and postcards.

Nick, if you see this flyer, please write me and tell me where I can find you! Your room at the hotel is still waiting for you – it's been cleaned up, but it is still your room. Your landlord has all your checks. I came out looking for you last week but couldn't find you anywhere – I'm very worried about you. Love, Bill.

Bill Taylor  
5436 Redwood Road  
Columbus, Ohio 43229

*Notice my handwritten markup changing "I" to "me" on the flyer to correct my grammar - thank you Tracy!*

I posted on multiple Missing Persons websites, no luck. Here’s a current, updated link to The Charley Project.

(<https://charleyproject.org/case/sydney-taylor>)

THE CHARLEY PROJECT


Donate

Search case here..

Q

Advanced Search

MENU



Taylor, circa 1999

Missing Since

12/02/1999

Missing From

San Francisco, California

Classification

Endangered Missing

Sex

Male

Race

White

Date of Birth

07/01/1940 (85)

Age

59 years old

Height and Weight

6'0 - 6'1, 190 - 200 pounds

Medical Conditions

Taylor has paranoid schizophrenia.

Distinguishing Characteristics

Caucasian male. White hair, blue eyes. Taylor's nickname is Nick and he may spell his first name "Sidney." He may have a beard. Taylor appears to be homeless.

Details of Disappearance

Taylor was released from San Francisco General Hospital on December 2, 1999. Some accounts state he in the psychiatric unit, but his brother says he was at the hospital getting treatment for an injured arm. He was supposed to return to his residence at a hotel in the 60 block of Geary Street in San Francisco, but never arrived. He has never been heard from again.

Few details are available in Taylor's case. He may be homeless.

Investigating Agency

San Francisco Police Department  
415-558-5500  
415-553-1071

Source Information

[Outpost for Hope](#)

[North American Missing Persons Network](#)

[The Doe Network](#)

Updated 2 times since October 12, 2004. Last updated May 19, 2008; distinguishing characteristics and details of disappearance updated.

Case Searches

Case Updates

Information

Resources

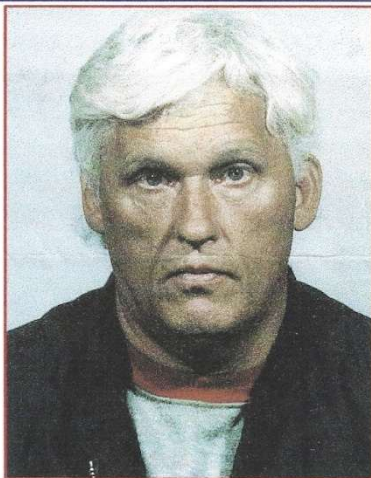
Legal

Screenshot that is still active in 2025

A crushing realization was setting in. Especially when in late April 2000, SFPD sent me the official Missing Person's bulletin that was produced for my brother. Seeing it in print, after all we had done to find him, I cried.

## MISSING PERSON

Date: 4/20/2000  
Case #: 000184347  
Name: SYDNEY TAYLOR  
Alias: SIDNEY  
Address: 66 GEARY ST. # 603  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA  
Height: 6 Feet  
Weight: 200  
Age: 59  
Sex: M  
Eyes: BLUE  
Hair: WHITE  
Complexion: MEDIUM  
Race: WHITE  
BirthDate: 7/1/1940



### OTHER INFORMATION BELOW

SUBJECT WAS RELEASED FROM THE PSYCH UNIT AT SAN FRANCISCO GENERAL HOSPITAL ON 12/02/99 AND WAS SUPPOSED TO RETURN HOME TO 66 GEARY ST.. HE HAS NOT BEEN HEARD FROM SINCE.

HE HAS SF NUMBER 391307 AND CII NUMBER A07452998.

HE WAS DIAGNOSED AS PARANOID SCHIZOPHRENIC.

REFER ANY INFORMATION TO THE MISSING PERSONS UNIT.

San Francisco Police Dept - Missing Persons Section  
(415) 558-5500 or (415) 553-1071

TRAK (16.1.6.48) This flyer produced on a TRAK System. For more information about TRAK see [www.trak.org](http://www.trak.org)

## **Time Passes and Bill's Conspiracy Theory**

For the next 20 years, we heard nothing. I called SFPD over the years for updates and gave them updated contact information whenever we moved. My Aunt Graeme died in 2002. Over the years, everyone presumed Nick was dead, including me. After visiting with him, I thought it was a miracle he was still alive in 1999. Bad teeth, bad injury, no money and now that he was missing - presumably living on the streets. I thought for sure he finally committed suicide he threatened all those years to my mother. A lot of people who jump off the Golden Gate Bridge are never found due to currents, storms and shark-infested waters. The one person who thought Nick was still alive was my sister Molly. For no reason, she just knew he was still alive. Ok two persons. Our daughter Bayly also thought he was still alive, though she REALLY had no reason to believe that other than her faith.

But I had my own conspiracy theory about this whole situation. No one really believed it but my telling the story was entertaining. And you know what? I still think there might be a connection, here's the theory I concocted:

My Aunt Graeme was a devout Jehovah's Witness who truly cared and worried about my brother Nick. But in many ways the church owned her. She always told me and my siblings that her house in Berkeley would be left to her brother Syd's surviving children - Nick (missing but presumed alive), Molly, Ned and me. She repeated it frequently, the house had been left to her and my father when their parents died. And she had no children. But after she died we found out that on her death bed she changed her will to give her home to the Jehovah's Witnesses instead of us. I

took this change hard; I spoke to lawyers and was ready to sue. Fortunately, my brother Ned and sister Molly talked me off the ledge and I grudgingly accepted it after some time had passed. Today I'm glad I haven't spent the past 20 years agonizing over it. I win. But here's how the theory goes:

- My Aunt Graeme would never do anything to harm Nick; in fact she genuinely wanted to help him and giving the house to all of us could possibly help get him the care he needed.
- But in my theory the church had a work-around. They would promise to take care of Nick as long as my aunt bequeathed the family house to them. Bill, Ned and Molly were all doing fine, they hadn't really been close to their aunt, they didn't really need any help, but the church did. This is a way-too-frequent message coming from devout members of cults who are manipulated into giving their estates to their "church".
- My theory is that Nick wasn't truly missing, he was being "taken care of" but given no ability to communicate with his family. Wherever he was he had a mailbox that he'd deposit his many letters and cards thinking they were going to me but instead they were being held, or destroyed, by the church. And Nick was left to believe none of his siblings cared about him.

What are the chances this is true? All I can say is that the detectives at San Francisco PD were very interested in my theory. They've seen some things. But my opinion of my own theory changed in 2024 when I discovered what I believe happened to my brother Nick. What I found doesn't void the theory completely, but it makes it less likely.

## The Online Obituary

In May 2024, I received a card from Molly asking me to call her immediately - she had something she had to tell me. My communications with Molly had become a little fractured over the previous 6 months. She had unexpectedly declined my offer to throw her an 80th birthday party, she told me couldn't wait to see me, then she told me to stay away. By May 2024 we had settled our disagreements but now here was this card asking me to call her immediately. When I got her on the phone, she told me about this flag that she said had been on the coffin of our great-great grandfather Taylor. Her description of the flag left me wondering if she had it right. When it arrived I found a beautiful 45-star United States of America flag that I researched and found out was flown during the period July 4, 1896 to July 3, 1908. I started Googling my grandfather's name, Sydney Wentworth Taylor, Jr., and eventually landed on [familysearch.org](https://familysearch.org). There I saw a family tree with my father (SWT III) who died in 1968 and my grandfather (SWT II) who died in 1944. The eldest Sydney Wentworth Taylor, the one I was really looking for, appeared in the listing but without a hyperlink for more information. But over on the right side of the webpage I saw an obituary from [legacy.com](https://www.legacy.com) that caught my attention.

## Sydney W. Taylor

Published 08/10/2023

Sydney W. Taylor  
obituary, Colma  
California

Sydney Taylor, age 83, of Moss Beach passed away on Saturday, July 22, 2023. To plant a beautiful memorial tree in memory of Sydney, please visit... [Read More](#)

### PUBLISHED IN

  
Last Name  
"Taylor"

  
Colma, CA

  
Colma  
Cremation  
& Funera..

My brother Nick was born on July 1, 1940 - he would have been 83 on the date of this obituary, July 22, 2023! What followed next was an all-in family search effort. Nan, oldest daughter Bayly and I were in Nan and my bedroom, youngest daughter Morgan was on the phone. We all had our devices, searching for more information. I had seen several online obituaries for various Sydney Taylors over the years, none of them my brother. Or my father for that matter. But here was an obituary that looked legitimate. As we searched, we found more sites that included his full middle name and year of birth. It had to be him! Or did it? I was getting suspicious again. I searched how indigent burials are paid for in California and found that the State paid a considerable amount to the mortuary. Was it possible that someone at Colma Cremation and Funeral Services had used my brother's missing person's information to fraudulently steal money? My mind was racing, I needed to talk to San Francisco Police Department, they had our two original Missing Person's reports from 2000.



The next morning I started calling the two SFPD precincts from the notes I kept for Nick. Neither one exists today. And the detectives had all retired. So, I started calling any associated number; I spoke mainly to dispatchers who had no idea what to do with my requests. They were all very nice, my questions were just not the usual. Eventually one of the dispatchers told me to try the San Francisco Police Department's Special Victims Unit. That call changed everything.

An investigator answered the phone, and I began my spiel. "I think I'm seeing an obituary for my missing brother, he was buried in Colma, CA, he died at the Moss Beach Hospital (formally known as AHMC Seton Medical Center Coastsides). Is this real? He's been missing since 1999. Is this fraud? How did they not find me? I could hear the detective hammering at her keyboard as I was rambling. The investigator expressed true sympathy - we exchanged email addresses, phone numbers, full names - all while she kept hammering at her keyboard. We eventually hung up the phone; I emailed her and soon got a reply. Yes, that obituary looks legitimate. Colma Cremation and Funeral Services was cleared of all suspicion (the suspicion was mine, never SFPD).

Pam Hofsass is a retired Lieutenant, Inspector and Patrol Officer from the San Francisco Police Department. She's currently a part-time Special Victims Unit Investigator with SFPD. She came back to SFPD after spending 7 years as Chief of Forensic Services for Contra Costa County. And on that crazy day when I called, she just casually picked up the phone.

After a few days Pam confirmed what she found initially - my brother, Sydney Wentworth Taylor IV, died July 22, 2023, while a patient at Seton Medical Center Coastsides in Moss Beach

California. Pam and I planned for my daughter Bayly and I to meet her during a trip we had already planned to the Bay area in June 2024. Bayly was scheduled to undergo treatment for a medical condition at Stanford University, we could meet Pam on the Monday before Bayly started treatment on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, our family was in hyper-vigilant stress mode. Nan and I were both retiring on May 31, 2024 and we were in the final preparations. Everything from Social Security to Ohio Public Employees Retirement to Medicare to organizing a celebration to making sure our employers and employees were ready for our departures. Oh yea, and work! It was a lot, now piled on with revelations about my brother Nick.

All the while, I was freely sharing this tale of my brother's whereabouts being discovered, every day brought new details. I was sharing these new stories and collections of facts with anyone who'd listen.

*"Did you know, Colma California is known as the City of Souls because most of its boundaries are filled with cemeteries."*

*"We have a detective looking at his story."*

*"My sister Molly reminded me she thought he was still alive all along when everyone else KNEW he had been dead for years."*

My family was collectively putting together questions for Pam Hofsass.

*"Who else should we be reaching out to?"*

*"How did the police and providers not reach out to me?"*

*"Are there records we can look at?"*

We calmed down a bit and realized that before we could answer any of these questions we needed to hear from Pam. And we needed to retire. But as May turned to June I realized all the close opportunities we had to find more, earlier. In many ways, we were so close!

### **A Couple of Near Misses**

As I've written earlier, I visited California sporadically between 2000 and 2022, I had pretty much given up on the search. Occasionally I had Googled my brother's name, nothing ever showed up. If I did get to the City, I'd always go by the Graystone - it's the only connection I really had.

In July 2023 I flew out to San Francisco to meet my good friend Jim Kane to see the last shows of Dead and Company's Final Tour. I arrived in San Francisco on July 13, 2023 and immediately took the train from the airport to 66 Geary Street to see Nick's place. Because that's what I've done nearly every time I've been to SF. I walked past the hotel, noticed a few changes, said "hello" to Nick, then headed to my hotel closer to Oracle Park.

The next day, July 14th, 2023, at Jim's urging we both went back to the Graystone Hotel so I could show him. Jim was very sympathetic and always interested in my brother's story. And he brought something I wasn't expecting - a string of Tibetan prayer flags. So, Jim strings the flags on a gate next to the building and snaps my picture. Totally unaware that my brother was still alive but would die 8 days later!



*Bill outside of 66 Geary St with Tibetan prayer flags*

A second near miss was from March 2024 when my family went on our biggest vacation since 2014. Nan, Bayly, Morgan, Morgan's husband Seth and I all traveled to California for a combination of events - vacation, celebrating my sister Molly's 80th birthday, meeting with a Stanford Medicine doctor for my daughter Bayly, and connecting with my new-found (in 2018) second cousin Steve Ludwig and his family at Steve's home in Moraga. The birthday celebration didn't happen, but we were able to add some sightseeing in the Bay area that included seeing Nick's last-known residence at the Graystone Hotel. It was just a drive-by but I narrated the visit with tales of my previous attempts at finding my brother. All understandable.

But the March 2024 visit also included lunch at a beautiful seaside restaurant just north of Half Moon Bay, Moss Beach

Distillery. I had never been there before, my son-in-law Seth found it while searching on his phone as we were driving to see Half Moon Bay from our AirBnB in Menlo Park. And from Moss Beach Distillery we snapped pictures of... Moss Beach! Or at least the southern portion of the seaside portion of Moss Beach. In March of 2024 I'd never heard of Moss Beach. And we had no idea that we were within a mile from Seton Medical Center Coastal where my brother had died just over a year earlier.



*View of south Moss Beach from Moss Beach Distillery*

## **SFPD, The Search Is On, Connecting The Dots**

We met Pam Hofsass at her office Monday June 10, 2024. She was even more amazing in person than she'd been on the phone. Pam has been part of innumerable investigations of missing

persons, using the latest in forensic science to help find and identify the living and the dead. Yet she took such a strong interest in my story. She explained how difficult it is to find missing persons and how the systems have improved but they're not perfect. My brother's files were mainly paper-based. While the postings on the Missing Person's sites were informative, they weren't connected to any government system for a cross examination. My brother had somehow gotten from San Francisco General Hospital to San Mateo County pretty early in his disappearance. And he probably didn't want to be found - he didn't trust anyone, he suffered from paranoia. Today there are more nationwide systems and forensic tools, but not when Nick disappeared in 1999. What we had was the name of the hospital where he died and the crematorium that handled his remains (his ashes were scattered at sea). No real timeline from 1999 to 2023, just that he somehow made it to a hospital.

Pam gave us more information about Nick but it was much less than I was hoping for. Some old arrest records (disturbing the peace primarily) but he was never formally charged. Her packet of information included a picture of his 1995 State of California ID.

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES**  
**IMAGE RECORD FOR:**  
**SYDNEY WENTWORTH TAYLOR IV**

**C5165732**

**EXPIRES:** 07/01/2002

**CLASS:**

**SEX:** M

**HAIR:** WHT

**EYES:** GRN

**HEIGHT:** 602

**WEIGHT:** 190

**DATE OF BIRTH:** 07/01/1940

**ADDRESS:** 66 GEARY ST, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94108

**PHOTO DATE:**

04/16/1996

**PHOTO OFFICE:**

503

**APPLICATION DATE:**

**APPLICATION OFFICE:**

**ISSUE DATE:**

04/16/1996

**ISSUE OFFICE:**

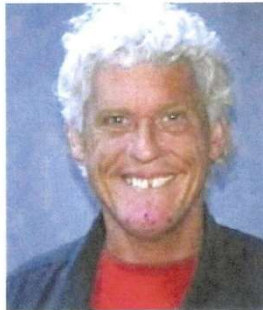
503

**RESTRICTIONS:**

**PHOTO SEQ #:**

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**ENDORSEMENTS:**



**SIGNATURE:**

**FINGERPRINT:**



This photograph is a true copy of the photograph that is contained on the Department of Motor Vehicles photo database and delivered over the Department of Justice Cal-Photo communications network.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ /s/ \_\_\_\_\_

As we were driving away from SFPD headquarters I was outwardly melancholy about the lack of information. Bayly convinced me we had to go to the hospital. Now. I might have

blown it off while I thought about it, but she said no. Thank you Bayly.

We drove south to the Seton Medical Coastal location at Moss Beach. Indeed it was really close to the distillery we had eaten at, just across Highway 1. But when we arrived, it was closed! It was under construction to repair storm damage suffered in March 2023. As we sat in the nearly vacant parking lot a security person asked us if we needed help. I gave him a brief snippet, he told us that the staff and records from the Moss Beach facility had been transferred up to Seton Medical Center in Daly City. So, with Bayly telling me we had to go, off we went.

The Daly City facility was also partially closed due to what looked like possible storm damage. It was laid out strangely, we had to enter through the Emergency entrance. Once we passed through security we could really go wherever we wanted to. Medical Records seemed like the right place, we headed downstairs through a labyrinth of hallways. We walked into Medical Records and were greeted by Tammy. She seemed a little preoccupied but she listened to me and began an initial search. Nothing. She told us she'd call me in 2 days to see if she found anything to help us, we shared contact information.

Two days went by, nothing. I was still in California while Bayly underwent treatment. So I called Tammy. She said she found some information on Nick - she told me she found information in the mental health computer systems, not the physical health systems. Tammy said she had found some records that could help me - she actually found a lot of records and wondered how many I might actually need. I didn't want to just blindly ask for everything (I worked in public service, a broad records request is incredibly inefficient and possibly misleading)



so I gave her a page count or some such delimiter. On the Friday I had to pick up Bayly I drove back up to Daly City early in the morning and retrieved a package from Tammy with over 40 pages. Gold mine.

The package contained medical records on Nick spanning multiple years. Without all the context it was difficult to piece together the entire puzzle. Most of the records didn't have an obvious date. But these were real records, with doctors' names and care provided. They described cases where Nick's behavior warranted intervention (patient entered another patient's room and urinated on the floor), or treatment that he was given (vaccines, pain medication, mental health medications). They painted a picture that made me tear up with happiness - my brother Nick, who I thought probably died on the streets or by committing suicide, had been incredibly well cared for.

But for how long? It looked like he arrived at the Moss Beach facility in November of 2019. But there were two records that seemed to contradict one another. One record said the patient arrived by helicopter after being rescued off the "cliffs of Daly City". Another record said the patient arrived from another mental health institution. Which was it? Who can I call? One of the answers went back to documents I received from Pam Hofsass and the Death Certificate I had requested online. Nick had a Conservator from San Mateo County, California. In fact he'd had more than one but the one of the Death Certificate was a woman named Trena Patton.

I made a lot of phone calls and looked at a lot of websites. Government websites are notoriously difficult to navigate. I worked within "Government" for 27 years, I honestly can understand. Depicting the complexity of a huge organization so

that the average citizen can navigate is not easy. Or clearcut. I had Trena's name but digging into her further proved difficult. I was able to get a phone number and an email address, I started there.

Repeated emails and voice messages left did not get a response. So I looked around and found others who seemed to work in the same department. I found what looked like a co-worker, so I called Ricky Leung. He answered immediately and I went through my story about my brother, Trena Patton and my efforts to get more information. In this conversation, and all others I had with various State and County staff, I told them my intent up-front. I was not looking to blame anyone for not being able to find him all these years - Pam had given me a good synopsis of the challenges. I just wanted to find out where my brother had been, what happened to him along the way, how did he get the help he needed. And thank the people involved if our conversations warranted it. I didn't want money, I didn't want to sue. Just some peace of mind.

Ricky was new to his job, he handled the financial end of conservatorships, not interactions with their clients. He had no knowledge of my brother but he did have access to computer information that gave him some insight. Trena was definitely the person I needed to talk to. I ended up calling Ricky 3 or 4 times, each time he was surprised that Trena hadn't returned my calls or messages.

### **Enlisting some help**

I had been in touch with my 2nd cousin Steve Ludwig since our first visit to Stanford in March 2024. Steve and his wife Dana graciously hosted my family for brunch during that trip, we piqued their interest in Nick's story - at that time we knew

nothing, he was presumed dead. The Ludwig's, Steve in particular, was deeply interested in digging into broader family history, he's related to me through my mother's side, my grandfather John Arthur Elston. The story of Nick's disappearance was a fascinating vector with no answers.

That all changed with the discovery of Nick's obituary in May 2024. By June 2024 I had verbally shared information with Steve from SFPD, Seton Medical Center and our own detective work. In January 2025 Bayly and I were scheduled back at Stanford and I was putting an agenda together to get more answers. I arranged to stay with the Ludwig's and enlisted Steve to help me. I was looking for answers to questions. And I knew I really needed to go to the San Mateo County offices in-person.

- *What did Trena know about my brother?*
- *Where was Nick between 12/2/1999 and 11/26/2019?*
- *If he was indeed on "the cliffs of Daly City", how did he survive?*
- *Did he get SSDI payments? When were they reinstated?*
- *Did he try to reach out?*
- *Did he tell anyone he had family?*
- *Who helped him?*

## **January 2025: the Story is Coming Together**

I arrived at the Ludwig's the evening of Wednesday January 8, 2025. The next morning Steve and I had breakfast at a local diner, we plotted our day. Go to San Mateo County offices to talk to

Trena (the best I could figure, their website didn't really tell me who worked where), find the so-called cliffs of Daly City, meet with anyone who might have come in contact with Nick. We headed out, drove to 225 37th Avenue, San Mateo and found... the building was being demolished! It was kind of funny, it reminded me of finding the Moss Beach Medical Center closed and under construction. We poked around the job site, and a security guard told us there were still some County workers on-site at a building behind the construction. We navigated our way back there and saw a secured door with a call box on it. We stood there for a bit, wondering what to do, and finally hit the call button. A dispatcher answered and I told them we were looking for Trena Patton. They told us to hang on, after a bit they came back on and told us she worked in another building. And they gave us the address! Just a mile or so down the road, 2000 Alameda De Las Pulga, San Mateo.

When we arrived at this Government building I put in another call to Trena and left a message. Then I called my guy Ricky and left a message. Ricky returned my call shortly and told me I was at the right place and told me to enter, go to the 2nd floor and go into the receptionist's office. He said that Trena wasn't working there that day but that the Officer of the Day could help. I climbed the stairs to the 2nd floor and went into the receptionist's office. I introduced myself and realized I had spoken by phone to the gentleman behind the desk before. He contacted the Officer of the Day, Margine Ruiz.

I told Margine my story, she was very helpful and sympathetic. She was also irritated with the lack of response from Trena and she gave me the response I needed - she would write Trena and copy Trena's supervisor.

Steve and I returned to our car, feeling like we were making progress. We decided to head for the so-called Cliffs of Daly City, a park called Mussel Rock Park. Pictures and descriptions on the Internet do not come close to describing the park and adjacent natural areas. It does not appear to be a heavily traveled tourist area, though it should be. Except for the signs identifying this area being directly on the San Andreas Fault, prone to earthquakes. There were also signs describing expected weather conditions - cold, foggy, windy most of the year. And beware of Coyotes.

A closer examination led us to understand how someone like Nick could possibly live here for years, a decade even. First, he had a somewhat stable food supply - trash cans for tourists and visitors. That's a food supply I saw him use in San Francisco when I visited in March 1999. He also had access to fresh water; there were rain runoff troughs where rain water would refresh and accumulate. He had protection from the brutal weather - there were sunken areas that would be buffered from the harshest winds and weather. And maybe most importantly for a man who didn't want to be found - wild brush and grasses where you could avoid being seen even if someone were within 10 feet of your campsite. I could see, in my mind, Nick traversing the area, going into more populated areas for food or getting some assistance from the multiple jurisdictions which manage the area. I didn't really consider the coyote warnings but I'm sure Nick could fend them off as well.

It was lunch time, we left Mussel Rock Park and found a fun, old-timey restaurant called Original Joe's. It reminded me of places my father took me when he was still alive. After lunch, as

we returned to our car, I looked at my phone and saw that I had received a call from Trena Patton. I called, left another voice message and shortly after received a call back from Trena

I did not complain about her lack of response; I thanked her for calling. I reiterated what I was looking for and shared what I already knew. Where had Nick been before 2019? How did he survive? I described the notes in the medical records, emphasizing "cliffs of Daly City" and arrival from another mental health provider. In this conversation and a couple follow ups with Trena and others, I pieced together what had happened to my brother..

### **Blending Known Events with Likely Suppositions**

Based on what Trena told me and other facts I accumulated, my version of Nick's life from December 1999 until his death July 22, 2023 is getting clearer. Nick was released from San Francisco General Hospital on December 2, 1999. He never returned to his hotel room, he navigated to Daly City, probably by bus (there are city bus lines that go from the city to San Mateo County). He generally lived near the cliffs though I'm sure he went into town as necessary; he likely had some help as he navigated life. He was in great shape and he liked to walk. But in 2011, 11 years after he'd arrived, he was discovered emaciated and malnourished by a Park Ranger, presumably from San Mateo County. That led to him being airlifted to a care facility, most likely Seton Medical Center in Daly City. While being cared for they found out he was a previous recipient of Social Security Disability Income payments. And that he had over 10 years of back checks due him. He likely told them he didn't have any family, or he wasn't able to articulate it. Or there wasn't enough detail to start a search. In 2012 he was provided a San Mateo

County Conservator to look out for his well-being. I don't know exactly where he was housed over the ensuing 7 years, it was most-likely a combination of mental institutions and hospitals associated with Seton Medical Center. In 2019 it was determined he needed more end-of-life care and he was transferred to the Moss Beach facility where he died in 2023.

### **I Think I Know Enough... Then A Sad Realization**

I am a sentimental realist. I want to find out what happened to my brother and share our story. Not for gain but for communicating to all the people who were aware of his disappearance or concerned about his well-being that he died a dignified death. But I do not want this to be all-consuming. Maybe I'm selfish but I want to move on with my life. I feel like I did the best I could, I found out more than I thought was possible. My family deserves more of me than someone obsessed with finding details over something none of us can change. Today, I think I'm good with what I know, discounting my conspiracy theory.

But there has been a sad realization - I had information in my hands that would have helped me in this search 23 years ago. I didn't see this reality coming until I started investigating Nick's death in 2024. It went way beyond the "Near Misses" I've already described. I'm still coming to grips with what I've realized

In late 2000, a year after Nick had disappeared, I received two postcards from him. I was shocked. I went to the post office to see if there were more or if I could get any details on them. The answer was a definitive "no". Back in 2000, and occasionally over the years, I looked at the cards and I interpreted that they were written while he was still recovering from the injury I knew

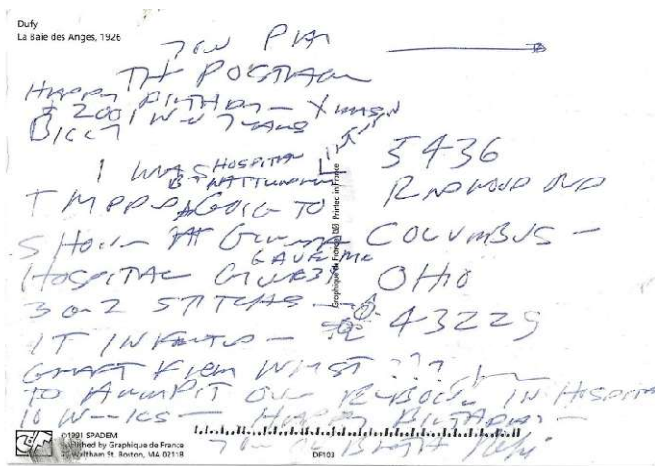
about from Fall of 1999. I shared the cards with my family, we took guesses at what might have happened. Were these sent before he disappeared? Or maybe after he disappeared? Where was he when he sent these, they include comments about Daly City? He liked nice places, maybe he's just talking about a place he'd like to be. Over the succeeding years I filed it in my brain that these were cards written before December 1999 that were just being delivered a year later. It happens, the US Mail found me and here they are.



*Front of first postcard*







*Back of second postcard*

Looking at these two postcards with my current knowledge, they look very different. How could I have missed it? He wrote these from Daly City! In 2000 or 2001! It's clear as it can be, these cards clearly say Daly City in them. He references his injury which would only be after he was released from the hospital.

*"My arm is not at full capacity - limited array of movement."*

*"Merry Christmas, Happy New Year"*

*"Merry Birthday, Xmas + 2001 New Year Bill"*

Crushing now but I can't change what's done. Would it have helped me find him sooner? I think so but of course I don't really know. Most of my discoveries since 2024 have been as good an outcome as I could have hoped for, all things considered. It certainly was much better than I feared - that's how I'm filing it in my brain anyway. Life is difficult, I refuse to beat myself up.

## **Will There Be More to Nick's Story?**

While I feel good about what I've discovered, there could always be more. I just won't be obsessed about it anymore. But something interesting has happened - Nick's longevity has made me look at my own life differently. The fact that Nick lived to be 83 means that my family's overall longevity may be much longer than I thought. My father died at the age of 61, my mother was 74, my sister Tracy was 53, my brother Ned was 69. I always thought I'd follow suit. But shoot, the brother with the least amount of resources lived to be 83! And Molly is now 81! I have already changed my story with my doctor; there is now a much stronger chance that I could live longer than I ever thought possible. Cool.

There is one other aspect of writing this story that still intrigues me. The readers of My Brother Nick may come forward with more/better details of his life and journey. Who were those Park Rangers who called in a helicopter to rescue him from the cliffs of Daly City? Did Nick really use a bus back in 1999 to get out of San Francisco? Or did a taxi driver or someone else help him? Living near the shore, who else did he come to know? Do I have the dates right? It's nearly a lifetime of memories, I may not have it all correct. But the most important, unanswered question for me is:

**At his campsites, or hospital rooms, were there any indications he was still trying to write to me?**

I'm not sure how I would feel either way, I'd just like to know.

