

MARIJUANA ESCAPADES

Chronicles Of An Incurrible Old Ganj a Man



James Tranmer

The following account is a true story. All dates, characters, confrontations and numbers can be substantiated through various court records, police archives, media accounts and documentaries ... and, of course, the memories of old souls.

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A Cast of Players

White Folks, with a couple of exceptions

The Brothers

Brian: Judy's and my oldest child. He grew up with, participated in, and remembers almost everything about the Church and our ganja smuggling history. He also knows all the characters, even better than I do in many cases, and he has no real contention with any of them. But being my son comes with its own cross to bear.

Tommy: Thomas Reilly, raised a Catholic in Dover, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston, he was at the camp in Papine, Jamaica when I initially arrived there in March, 1971. At one time he was thought to be by many, and thought of himself as, Paul the Apostle. Later, Tommy morphed into Brother Louv and became the official spokesman for the Ethiopian Zion Coptic Church in America.

Cliff - Clifton Middleton, also known as "The Chief". He'd initially been my friend, a travel companion and one-time business associate. He was brought up as a Catholic on a farm in Central Iowa. A major player in this story. He ended up like most everyone else associated with our adventure ... disappointed, disillusioned and broke.

Brad - Brad Rush, strong-willed and determined. He was a mighty figure in our futile struggle to overcome what we perceived to be the evil forces: Babylon. He was brave, skillful, and tireless, among many other qualities. He had his asshole moments, too, like the rest of us, but Brad was a reliable guy to work beside.

Don - Don Rush. Impatient, surly and almost always grouchy. Nicknamed "Duppy", he was a skillful, dependable stalwart of the Coptic Navy. He and his younger sibling, Brad, were as instrumental to the successes we achieved as anybody. Much more than most. Duppy always loathed me, personally, going back to an incident at Papine in 1971, but he was a confident boat captain and a master at improvising.

Carl - Carl Swanson, a man of great achievements. He was a good husband to Sister Jayne and a father, making the fatal decision to throw his lot in with us and follow Keith's lofty vision of spirituality, like me. He was an international emissary, listed as a registered officer of the Church on the papers of incorporation,

and he had passed his bar exams at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. Carl was licensed to fly a plane and dedicated to a fault. He died in battle while the rest of us dried up on the vine.

David - instrumental in the machine, especially after he'd been able to establish a steady market in the Northeast. He was the older brother of Bighead Stevie and husband to Sister Chris, who'd unquestionably proven her mettle under pressure. Many times, as did David. Smooth ambassador for the Church in many difficult situations.

RamRam - His nickname was derived from the character of his personality. He was fearless and willing at all times. He could always be relied on to perform, albeit often very quickly. He was husband to Sister Anne, and father of their children.

Billy - Always clutch in a squeeze. He proved to be one of the better, perhaps the best, businessman among the crew. He was brave, resourceful, and he established his independence, which was critical to the furtherance of our plans. At one point in time, he stood up to Keith's and Alan's myopic perception of how things should go. He married Clifton's sister, Beverly, and fathered their two children.

Butch - He was insanely devout in his loyalty to the insidious hierarchy of the Church. Staunch and rigid in his perceptions. He was a reliable soldier in our professed march toward the mythical Promised Land. Sister Vicki, ever humble and gracious, was his partner and wife throughout the adventure. Many children.

Bighead Stevie - one of the first white people to stumble onto Ivy's unique cosmic (a) in Jamaica. As soon as he'd gone back home to tell his people what he'd witnessed, he was committed to the nuthouse. That was his lot. But he was as sincere and as resolute as any of us. David's younger brother, he paid his dues and then some, never actually reaching the carrot which dangled before us.

Jacob - a Jewish brother from Des Moines, Iowa, Jake had more natural gas than the great State of Texas. He came to Papine in early 1971, and returned home to light up the Des Moines area like the aurora borealis. Then he faded, like me. He was a formative 'yes man', like me again. And to some degree, like all of us.

Gary - Jewish brother from Racine, Wisconsin, he was originally enlightened in Papine. He lost his sea legs when a boat he was on sank in the Bahamas. The crew was stranded on a deserted island for days until finally being rescued. Gary stayed on dry land in Jamaica after that.

Nate - a true friend over the years. I have a long list of times when he helped me and my family out during tight situations. Cynthia, his wife, and Judy were good friends. She and Nate were the first people who told me something was happening with some guy named Ivy in Jamaica. And something was. Nate was able to withstand Keith's tyranny.

Bobby - a good and humble man. He was a Jewish guy from Philly. I never saw anyone get as seasick as Bobby did on one of our voyages to Jamaica for the ganja. Bobby never quite figured out how he'd gotten hornswoggled into the whole mess. But I haven't either. He eventually married Sister Sarah and they had a son to join Sarah's two daughters. Susannah and Elizabeth. And younger brother Matt. They managed to get away to Chicago and live their lives without the repressive drudgery of those hypnotic oblations.

Big Bob - Bob Eckert, a unique and memorable character in the whole saga. I met Bob in Iowa City after he'd served a brutal stint in Vietnam. I sold him hashish. I remember the tall, skinny, wild-eyed madman rocketing around town on his speedy Kawasaki rice rocket with a big, circular medallion hanging around his neck on a leather cord and his long hair blowing in the wind. The medallion was actually a half-pound, 1-inch thick, cylinder of Primo hash. There had only been a few pieces shaped like that. Bob bought one, hand-painted some hippie gibberish on it, and wore it around his neck. That was simply his opening act.

Howard - actually Howie, he was always on the cutting edge, where insanity meets dangerous discernment, seeing right through the hoax before anyone. He'd been on the 'Little Conch' with Brad and Duppy for the Coptic Navy's maiden voyage. And the little Jew from Skokie was a continual thorn in the side of the self-proclaimed Church elders. They ran him off in 1977. He was way too crazy for everybody. Howard went back to Chicago and became a multi-millionaire with a politically-connected paint and drywall business. Howie went completely nuts again in late 1988, trying to resurrect the Spirit Ivy had introduced us to in 1971. I joined him in 1989 up in the hills of Searcy County, Arkansas. Together with Big Bob, we had a short run before going up in flames. Figuratively and literally.

Lance - a fair-haired Italian from Des Moines, the former frontline combat Vietnam veteran was reliable, skillful and patient. Sister Claudia's older brother, which made him Howie's brother-in-law, Lance was always all-in on the smuggling moves. He crewed on the boat at least once, too.

Greg - Lance's younger brother, and also a Vietnam combat vet. Thus, he was Claudia's older brother, too. The epitome of loyalty and forbearance, Greg is a gifted horticulturist who was as dependable as the sunrise. He made many personal sacrifices to walk with us. A Dylan-like singer, songwriter and guitarist.

Harry - Jake's younger brother, he was instrumental over the years in facilitating the mountains of cash flowing south to both Miami and Jamaica. He married Sister Charlotte and raised a nice family in Iowa. He was a rigid and extremely authoritarian kind of guy. Even his Rottweilers were intimidated.

Chuck - he knew enough to stay away from the lunacy going on at the various Bible camps in Jamaica. He loved the herb to the max, but I guess we all did to some extent. He married Sister Irene and had a nice family. Their kids and our kids grew up together. Their son, Winson, and our son, Joe, are still best buddies.

Guitar playing Jim - professional musician. His presence on the guitar always upgraded the quality of our oblation. Married to Debbie, Sister Billie's sibling, they nurtured Felix, a top-rated bass player himself, and Felicia, fairest in the Florida Keys.

Alan - Apple was there from the beginning at Papine. He always had the Freudian vibe of 'Internal Affairs'. He knows the secrets of the ugly underbelly of the criminal elements of the operation, but would never say shit, even when he had a mouth full of it.

Pops - Loyal to a fault, skillful, he was always dependable and unbending in the dogmas of denial. Eventually took Sister Billie as his wife and raised a nice family. He got a taste of some of the 'Perfect Louv' that was not so perfect.

White David - Cynthia and Nate's oldest son. He was Brian's age, and together, they were easy prey for the brothers' disdain and insecurities. He was a 14-year-old cog in the wheel at Deer Isle, but managed to escape with a few others, and a German Shepherd dog, through the thick woods to safety.

Felix - Puerto Rican from Chicago, Brother Louv's trusted man for delicate maneuvers. Became a lionhearted seaman at critical moments. Felix and his brother, Albert, are still trusted friends with Brian.

Randy - reliable and reticent. The Bayou boatman suffered arrests at the Canal and Deer Isle. He finally got away from the unhinged cult sometime after serving his prison sentence.

Marv - Marvin Smith, one of the original Crusaders. He fell out of favor with Keith over a bullshit disagreement concerning the money. He was vilified by Keith, and then by the rest of us, of course, in what proved to be a portend of things to come. He was married to Sister Andy. Marv reminded me of Ivy's unique cosmic in 1987 when I'd neglected that fact for nearly half a decade.

Herbie - a long-forgotten Jewish brother from Skokie, he was staying at Ivy's camp at Papine when I'd first arrived in Jamaica in 1971. He was also the first white guy I saw get what we called "judgment". Luckily for him, he got away from the ill-fated goons who'd ostracized him.

Red Beard - a vital cog in the ganja-moving apparatus. He was a bit of a Neanderthal in the customs of social living. The Coral Gables native was resilient and tireless. He did his time with no whine. Red Beard was a man I met in the swamps of South Florida in '71. Aggressive and smart in most matters.

Sheldon - Another Coral Gables native. Red Beard's childhood pal. He was the best diesel mechanic we had. He did his time, too. Husband and father, he was married to Diana.

Little Michael - a young enthusiast who sacrificed his wife and a career as a railroad engineer to thanklessly toil for the Church. A valuable deckhand and Duppy's understudy for a while, Mike was loyal. He became a foil for the insecure toadies of travail, who always needed a perceived villain to harpoon.

Jaws - He got his nickname from a mishap on one of the boats. A swinging boom crushed his jaw. He subsequently had it wired shut for a time. I only crewed with him one time. He became a valuable member of the Coptic navy, married to Sister Debbie. He stayed on with the corpse of the Church until his passing.

Little Carl - fanatical minister from Des Moines. He was the first one to set up the Coptic News Organization, I.C.U. TV. He was one of Tommy's proteges. He did his time and became a vigilant advocate for legalization of, or even the rescheduling of, marijuana. He was both nationally renown and fabled in the State of Iowa. He helped get the bureaucracy moving to allow Brian and I to do time in the same prison. Pekin, Illinois from 2000 to 2005. That's where we celled together for the last 4+ years of Brian's sentence.

Little Dan - Judy's and my third child. Born in Trench Town, Jamaica. His closest childhood friend was an orphan by the name of Big Dan. Big Dan's mom died from a severe asthma attack in Jamaica when he

was very young, and his dad, Big Bob, got run off. Our Dan is a ganja man himself. He started his life in Kingston, Jamaica, 1972. Dan has suffered often and long due to my disregard for the feelings of others. He's been my trusted and reliable partner in many ventures over the years.

Joe - Judy's and my fourth child. Born in Tallahassee when his mother and I were both 39 years old. We were actually quite proud of ourselves. He was 5 months old when the cops raided the farm at Lloyd, Florida. Welcome to this world. Joe may have missed the Coptic years and experience, but his life has been irrevocably affected by the residual fallout of fanaticism.

Jeffrey - a humble guy, steady. He crewed many boat moves and witnessed much of the drama. Became an author after serving out his sentence. "Marijuana and the Bible" is one of his books.

Woody - the only black American who was part of this story. He got busted going through the U.S. Customs early on. He served his sentence and then spent most of his time in Jamaica. He married Tabbs and started a family.

Tony Burns - made a few dangerous moves early on in our story. He was married to Sarah, and the father of her 2 daughters, Susannah and Elizabeth.

Cave Dave - a Florida brother who first hooked up with Nate while building a house at the Ranch. He got recruited for the Deer Isle Debacle because they needed all the help they could get. For his effort he got 5 years.

Gil - likewise, a faithful and trusted associate who was called to action for the Mutilation in Maine. He got 5 years, as well. Thank you very much.

Robert - called up for duty in Maine. Desperation loves company. Take five ... years, that is.

Little Tommy - Michigan cornerstone, Tee managed to sidestep servitude after a stint of marijuana psychosis up in Trelawny in 1973. He was a good-hearted soul. He survived. Tommy helped me out a lot when I got out of prison.

Joel - a long-time part of the whole saga. He was shamefully treated by the Coptic hierarchy. He became my good friend in Arkansas and visited me in prison a few times.. He helped us out immensely while I was locked up. One-time husband of Jane Haist.

Churchill - a good friend. I'd heard of the Chinese businessman/farmer in the late 70s, but didn't start doing business with him until 1984. He was known as a man who had the 'sweetie' (fine herb), a reputation not shared by many. We started a retail marijuana shop on St Mark's Place in New York City in 1993, long before the concept was mainstream. We were co-defendants in a marijuana importation conspiracy trial in 1994 in Panama City, Florida. We were both convicted. Chalk another one up for Uncle Sam.

Tony Darwin - swashbuckling pilot for the Coptic Air Force. He performed amazing feats with the brothers, and did quite well for himself, defying the statutes against marijuana. His was another sad tale of betrayal. His girlfriend set him up for the kill. The authorities nabbed him in Hawaii.

Rasta Jack - attorney and friend to the brothers and sisters. Interceded often on our behalf in many tight situations.

The Kid - a low-key, high-octane pilot. Very accomplished in all facets of the game.

Manny Funes - Florida Department of Law Enforcement (F.D.L.E.) agent, he was our chief adversary who bested us on several occasions and came out victorious in the overall struggle. "Winning isn't everything; it's the only thing." Coach Vince would have been proud of you, Manny,

Sisters

Judy - the fairest in the land. She was a good girl who always stood beside me. She was the epitome of loyalty. Judy was a dedicated mother, a virtuous wife, a resolute daughter, a loving grandmother and a thoughtful sister. She loved people. She sat on tons of ganja over those lost years. Like a mother hen.

Jennifer - Jen to her faithful husband, Doug, who provided her with a very good life after a tumultuous childhood. She was resilient and determined. Thought for herself. Mother of three well-adjusted young adults. That's a miracle in itself. Brooke, Scott and Nick.

Cynthia - a loyal friend to Judy and me for many years. Nate's wife and mother of his children: David, Joy, Lula Mae, Charlie and John. Her tale of adventure and recognition while she was in Jamaica in 1970 had piqued my curiosity.

Jackie - an old friend. She was Judy's first and dearest friend during the Iowa City years and throughout much of our Coptic adventure. Her maiden name was on the deed to the Star Island property. Clifton's wife and the mother of their three daughters. Kali, Faith Ann and Rachel. She was always faithful and true.

Andy - Marv's, wife and mother of his kids. She was a gentle, sensitive soul who was cold-heartedly rebuffed by Keith.

Sarah - She was an Iowa City girl who spent a few weeks at Ivy's camp in Papine, 1971. She got hooked from that point on. She was a good wife to Tony Burns, initially, and later to Bobby. A good mother to Susannah, Elizabeth and Matt, she made her sacrifices in relative silence.

Cordelia - Sarah's high school bestie. She had to pass through some incredibly stressful moments before she married Tommy and became Sister Louv. She still worked the front lines, though, even after a harrowing escape at the Canal.

Anne - she was the only Sister they arrested at the Canal, stationed with Carl under the bridge. She's RamRam's wife and mother of Marcus. Brave and steadfast.

Bright Eyes - Anne's sister and Brad's wife, she was always rock-solid and totally dependable. Brad needed a stabilizing influence in his life, for sure.

Vicki - she had the patience of two saints. When I saw her a couple of years ago at an anniversary party (which occurred about 40 years after I'd last seen her), she was vivacious and outgoing. Her surprising

demeanor prompted me to muse, "Vicki could be the Cover Girl for the 1st edition of 'Coptic Repression of Women'."

Irene - Chuck's wife and mother of their 4 kids. She was a very good friend to Judy during my incarceration, when Judy needed a good friend.

Jayne - Carl's widow and the mother of their 3 children. She survived the tragic ordeal and now has a very mellow existence with her husband, Tom, and Julia, Aaron and Carl.

Eileen - she spent some time at Ivy's camp in Papine. She got busted in Canada early on, and paid the price. She married Gary.

Billie - Pops' wife and mother of their children, Little Collie and many more.

Chris - brave, independent wife of Brother David, and mother of their children, the oldest being Truth.

Beverly - Clifton's younger sister, Brother Billy's wife, and the mother of their 2 fine children. She was as gracious as when I'd first met her back in the day, serving lentils and rice to all the vagabond hippies around Iowa City.

Claudia - sister to Lance and Greg, wife of Howard and the mother of their children.

Teacher Jane - a private tutor for the young girls in the late '70s, A solid role model for all of them.

Jane Haist - "Zimmerwoman" to me in the heights of my madness. Mother of many of Joel's children. Helped out a lot of sisters and brothers after the Church's disintegration with a Cape Cod work program she created.

Ivy - George "Baker" Ivy: a fierce, red-skinned Rastaman. He was the guy I met in March, 1971 at his gospel camp near Papine, Jamaica, which is the epicenter of this story. That encounter changed my entire perception and my life. Ivy had undergone an 'incarnation' himself in August, 1970. He embodied an eternal covenant.

Keith - Keith Gordon, The undisputed head of the Church after Ivy died and the impetus behind it. He started off as a higgler and farmer who eventually ascended, in our eyes, to the role of High Priest in the unfolding, tragic tale. He made the key decisions for all church operations, conspicuously without the purity of Ivy's perspective. Keith's persona at the time seemed devout and relentlessly focused. He set the course for us to achieve the success we did in the ganja business for more than a decade,

Dougie - Laurenton Dickens, a much more subdued elder of the Church who grew increasingly wary of Keith's decision making. Eventually became a courtroom adversary of another faction who was making claim to some of the skeletal remains of what had once been the E.Z.C.C. Dougie became estranged from the body politic as the skulduggery became more and more sinister.

Rupee - He was with Ivy for much of the time I was in Papine. I remember his emphatic pronunciation of Zerubbabel. It had always been easy for me to talk with Rupee. Kindred spirits, perhaps.

Kootman - Isaiah Williams, Keith's father-in-law and an early advocate of the younger man's spiritual authority. He was eventually cast aside and openly humiliated for all to see at the second Sanctification gathering in St. Thomas. Their rift was over money and power. What else is new?

Wally - Walter Wells, a very mean-spirited old man who was installed by Keith as a venerated prop to intimidate and control the gullible, unsuspecting white folks. The name Ethiopian Zion Coptic Church was not part of our lexicon until Wally showed up in Trelawny in 1973. Wally absolutely loathed Ivy and his legacy.

Sheriff - Wally's valet, he could be a tyrant with the children. Not inherently as crusty as his mentor.

Jehu - Another of Wally's prodigies. A decent brother.

Dennis Ivy - Brother Ivy's oldest son, he witnessed the entire saga from a very unique vantage point. Dennis knows much of the history of Louva Williams and his teachings. He knew then, and still knows, the Coptic experience was only an illusion of Ivy's fiery revelation.

Niah Edward - A converted dreadlock from Trelawny Parish. I learned a lot of things from him over the years. He always had my respect.

Reginald Toney - Guyanese sailor, became Coptic fishing boat captain. A good seaman and a mellow brother. He eventually crewed on several boat movements to the U.S. He was busted at the Canal and deported.

Bill Blackledge - Wild Bill. A Jamaican Scotsman, businessman, pilot, and infamous international phantom, He was brave and resourceful. Player, player. Sought by authorities for decades, he was one they never caught up with.

Toots - An international Reggae star who often came amongst us. His presence during the chant services helped make the sound of it far more impressive, and more than acceptable. Kootman was his mentor.

Joe Allen - An infamous enforcer for the Jamaica Constabulary Force. A Vietnam veteran who'd served for the U.S. during the war in exchange for a green card. He was eventually assassinated by the Jamaican police. A born killer, he'd been getting too independent.

Black David - Keith's oldest son. His mother was Audrey. He married Bigga Ford's daughter and fathered children with her. Like his stepmother, Phyllis, he was murdered at Beverly Hills.

Ian - Son of Keith and Phyllis. He was stabbed to death, along with his mother, at the Beverly Hills compound.

Johnny - alias Robert F. DeMarco. A Jamaican of Indian ethnicity who befriended Keith in the Spanish Town Prison. Escaped from there and came to America on the Coptic sailboat, Rugantino. Informed on the operation at the Ranch.

Countless Jamaican brothers and sisters whom we encountered along the way. From Papine to Trelawny, Sirgany Drive to Mandeville and Seaside, then Stillwell Road and Coptic Heights. Ruler, Doctor, Brother

Danny, Brother Bunny, Brother “G”, Stanky (Stankowitz), Ever, Red, Owen, Utan, Little Niah, et al. All friends, brothers and sisters.

Jamaican Sisters

Flowers - one of Ivy's wives and mother of three of his children.

Blossom - Shine's wife. She was a disciple of Louva Williams. Always close to, and often involved with, the Church congregation. She washed the afflictions on Ivy's feet at Papine.

Phyllis - one of Keith's wives and mother to four of his children. She was a volatile woman who acted out the role of "Jezebel" in our mini-drama. She was stabbed and murdered after Keith died from his shameful tragedies. We should have listened to her about him, though. She always maintained he was a skunk. She was right.

Pee - Phyllis's younger sister and teenaged concubine of Keith. The focus of many spectacles. Not the least of which was impersonating Leah in the Biblical trio of Jacob, Leah and Rachel. Spare me, please.

Mama - mother of both Phyllis and Pee. Phyllis's father was Kootman; Pee's father was a local preacherman.

Miss Jan - Wally's teenaged concubine in Trelawny. She brought him out of his self-imposed celibacy, and he didn't even know it. He quickly made up for lost time. He couldn't even see, but he knew she was a babe.

Joanne - Wally's wife in St. Thomas, and mother to three of his children.

Footnotes: (a) cosmic - this was a word we always used to describe the surrounding aura or ambience of a person, a thing or a situation.

Prologue

“We Got The Bone”

It was the middle of the week, early 1980. Tension was high. The pressure was on. Everybody was on point and in place. We were just west of Miami. Krome Avenue (which is State Road 997 north of the Tamiami Trail) was the section of highway that we would use for our late-night caper. That ribbon of blacktop slicing through the barren scrub-oak and saw-palmetto wilderness was seldom used by any vehicles late at night.

The “Chief” had the intersection at Krome Avenue and U.S. Highway 41 covered at the south end. At the time it was just a desolate crossroads. “RamRam” had the north end of the road clearly in sight, where State Road 997 merged with “Bloody 27”. (The nickname because of its long history of fatal wrecks). Butch roamed Krome Avenue south of the Trail to alert us of any potential intruders. At the opportune moment, hopefully, we would be using more than a quarter mile of the smooth asphalt surface as a landing strip to bring in a 2000-lb load of Jamaican herb. The ganja.

Our plan of action was pretty basic. When the twin-engine Cessna broke the Florida coastline, they would radio ahead and give us their exact ETA. We needed at least 1500 feet of the level pavement to bring the plane in safely. Our segment of choice was a piece of the highway about five miles north of the Krome Avenue-U.S.41 intersection. Then, after we'd heard that information from the crew, we would make the necessary ground preparations. They'd land; we'd offload the precious cargo; return the seats (which were in the back of my van) back onto the plane; button it up and send it off into the darkness. The extended Dodge van was backed into an overgrown siding. We were all crouched beside it waiting. Nate, “Red Beard”, Billy and me. We heard the radio crackle and the voice of the co-pilot, Wild Bill, giving us their precise location.

“Roger that!” the Chief answered over the blue, rectangular, ground-to-air radio. The four of us took off like sprinters into the shadowy night. We had to run between numerous 6-volt, battery-powered lanterns that we had lining both sides of the narrow, makeshift runway. Those portable beacons would provide the necessary lighting for the small aircraft to land on the highway. We already had experience from several previously successful landings at that very spot. That gave us some measure of confidence that we could pull it off again. We knew the secluded stretch of highway was often completely desolate in the wee hours of a morning. And after that miniscule fact, we operated strictly on blind faith. Especially regarding almost

all of our audacious exploits. But as we prepared to do it again, there was a tangible foreboding of desperation.

The "Kid" put the Cessna down like the pro he was. The side door flew open, and bales of marijuana started flying out. We'd fling them as far as we could into the brush near where the van was parked. The load was about a ton. The bales were close to 40 pounds each, so approximately 50 bales. We'd just begun tossing the rectangular blocks when we heard the Chief's voice break the silence. "A logging truck just turned onto Krome; it's comin' your way," he shouted, anxiety and alarm resonating in his voice. "Blood clot! You got 5 minutes! Get the plane out of there!"

We all heard it. What was already a rapid pace became fervent. The bales piled up along the side of the road. We raced to get the seats back onto the plane. We could actually see the headlights of the truck bouncing toward us when we finally got the door of the Titan Ambassador slammed shut. The Kid revved the twin turbo engines, turned on the landing lights, and motored north on State Road 997, away from the oncoming danger. In a few seconds they were airborne, disappearing into the night sky, their lights extinguished. They were 2000 pounds lighter as the darkness swallowed them up.

In less than a minute the empty logging truck rumbled past us. Bales of marijuana were still piled erratically by the roadside, and the lights lining the highway still shone brightly. I crouched amid the heap of neatly-wrapped blocks as the other brothers disappeared into the surrounding underbrush. I can't say what the driver may have seen as he passed the unusual scene, nor what he may have thought about it, but whoever was driving that rig never let up on the gas pedal. After the truck sailed past us we picked up everything as fast as we could and got the hell out of there. When we made it to the stash house, we quickly put the illicit cargo securely away and recited a Psalm. It was both a prayer of relief and triumphant thanksgiving. When all was secure, we lit up the kutchie pipe and recounted the adventure again in great detail. We were in a state of grateful euphoria. Glory be to God, another round provided.

1 My first smoke

The first time I smoked marijuana was in June, 1966. I was 22 years old. I had recently married the lovely Judith Kay Tranmer, nee Campbell. We had an infant son, Brian, who was just a few months old at that time. Judy and I left Brian with her parents in Muscatine, Iowa and drove to Wichita, Kansas for the wedding of our good friends, Chuck Joseph and Jeri Stevens. I was slated to be one of the groomsmen.

The wedding was set for a Saturday. So on Thursday night there were bachelor and bachelorette parties, respectively. I don't know what the girls did (I hope it was something naughty), but the guys were engaged in some serious drinking and preposterous storytelling. One of the stories was a tale from Vietnam, which in 1966 was the hot topic nationwide. I had already served in the U.S. Army, so the draft for soldiers to go to war in Nam didn't really affect me like it did most of my contemporaries, but I will forever remember a very gruesome Southeast Asia narrative. Many of the guys at the stag party that night were in the same fraternity. One of their buddies, a former frat brother, had dropped out of school, lost his temporary deferment, and been drafted. He'd been sent to Vietnam. Another one of the frat brothers, whom they all knew, had received, in the mail from the battlefield to the Midwest college town, the shriveled-up ear of a dead Viet Cong soldier. A story like that will take the air out of a room in a hurry. But there was plenty of beer with a few shots of whiskey mixed in, so that somewhat soothed the surreal tale. After a while somebody pulled out a small bag of marijuana. I'd never seen the dreaded weed before that moment. A couple of joints made their way around. I took several hits in turn and coughed accordingly. But because of the alcohol, or maybe the weed was simply low quality, I didn't really feel anything unusual.

But the next day was a different story. Friday afternoon we gathered together again at someone's apartment. The mysterious marijuana man showed up with the weed again. Or it may have been a different guy with better weed. That time there were no other influencing substances to mask the effects of the illicit drug. I got high. Really sailin'. Oh, yeah! Unable to deal with the strange new consciousness, I stayed behind in the apartment while all the other guys went outside to wash their cars and toss around a football. That's when I felt some very unfamiliar sensations, and I experienced ineffable flights of fantasy. One of the things that had me mesmerized in my solitude was the notion that I could somehow comprehend what those guys were talking about outside while they hosed off their cars and tossed around the pigskin. Complete reverie. Imagine my shock and amazement when everybody returned to the apartment and I realized that the gist of their conversation was exactly what I had conjured up in my subconscious while cruising on the cannabis. Holy crap!

I somehow sensed, and actually said it at the time, that the intoxicating substance, by whatever measure or name, and I, would have a very long and lasting relationship. I had no idea the path I had selected would be so fraught with instability. But it was. And in many ways continues to be. That experience would alter my life and the lives of my family forever. I became a confident proponent of the illicit “plant of renown” immediately. I was sure the much-maligned flower was far more widely used than the powers-that-be wanted to admit. How could something that made me feel so good and, obviously, lifted me up to a new, inconceivable dimension of awareness be deemed harmful to humanity? It just didn’t seem possible.

I tried to smoke up as many people as my limited range of family, friends and acquaintances allowed. One of my younger brothers, Zack, recently reminded me of several memorable exploits during that interim. He and his friend, Pat Corrigan, were two of the very first ones who sampled the transitory enchantment produced by smoking the green vegetable matter resembling marijuana. After a period of monumental adjustments for me, I wanted more herb to smoke. And I wanted to smoke it more often. So, I managed to arrange for a purchase of Mexican weed from a good friend. Five kilos, \$150 a key. I paid for it by cashing out a John Hancock Life Insurance policy my dad had advised me to buy when I went into the Army. The insurance agent had been Hal Trosky Jr., a local sports star who’d flirted with the Major Leagues. His father, Hal Sr. had been a star first baseman for the Cleveland Indians in the ’30s and ’40s. The redemption value of the whole-life policy was enough to buy the marijuana. Zack chipped in the life savings he’d accumulated from working a paper route and, later, busing thousands of dishes at Bishop’s Cafeteria. He remembers sitting in the living room of my townhouse (Corrigan, Zack and me) breaking up the weed into more serviceable baggies. The kilos weren’t 2.2 pounds, as the international weights and measures conversion table suggests, but the “lids” weren’t ounces, either. The projected retail value of the five red-cellophane-wrapped bricks was well over 5 grand. I had worked as a draftsman at Collins Radio in Cedar Rapids and later as an insurance and securities salesman for Life Investors of Iowa and Mid-America Mutual Funds. I’d had to pass the exams in Des Moines to get licensed by the Iowa Insurance Commission and then the Securities Exchange Commission to sell the investment programs. It would have taken me almost a year to earn that figure at Collins, and I was getting fleeced by my mentor at Life Investors, so I wasn’t exactly raking it in selling stocks either. The prospect of making some easy cash was enticing. And no taxes! Count me in. I bought a new ‘68 GTO and started selling “lids” out of its roomy trunk for \$20 apiece. Judy, Brian and I moved into the townhouse. We were shittin’ in tall cotton. That’s when Jennifer, our second child and only daughter, was born, making us a quaint family of four.

My old friend, Ronnie Matus, and I used to gamble on our ridiculous golf games everyday for months, smoking weed and slicing golf balls. Even though Ron has a handicapped left arm, I rarely won a hole and never won a round. My affinity for golf grew, but not nearly as rapidly as my love for the herb. Besides tending to two multiple-unit rental properties we owned (my dad and I under the auspices of H.T. & T. Corporation), I no longer kept a regular job. \$20 bills seemed pretty easy to come by. Years later, Ron went down to Jamaica on Good Friday of 1975 to see me. He was able to see Judy and the kids at a house in Mandeville, but I wasn't there. I was out on a boat with some of the brothers making a clandestine smuggling movement. Ron and I talked about it years later and had a few good laughs.

2 Ivy

The late 1960s and early 1970s were volatile times in the United States. Primarily, a burgeoning opposition to the bloody, vicious and ultimately fruitless massacre in Vietnam had resulted in unprecedented unrest. Marijuana had come onto the scene, along with countless other conflicting issues. Revolutionary music and a shitload of experimental, illicit drugs. The hippie movement became a phenomenon no one could have predicted or imagined. A new and ever-evolving culture swept the country ... and the earth. I had completely changed my lifestyle by then, too, morphing from a fairly straight Iowa boy (married father of two children, selling investment portfolios in Cedar Rapids) into a long-haired hashish dealer and the co-owner of a cutting-edge countercultural store in the middle of the Midwest hippie scene in Iowa City.

My old college friend and one-time roommate became involved in a college fraternity ring of smugglers at Wichita State University. They were importing modest amounts of Afghanistan hashish using fine-looking sorority girls and other lovely, fair-skinned coeds as mules to bring it right through Customs in the Canadian metropolis of Montreal. In suitcases, no less. Then they'd drive the contraband across the border into the U.S. and cash it in for currency. Real U.S. dollars. This, of course, was all done prior to the current political madness governing the mountainous, Middle-east country now. At that time, Afghanistan still had a King, and women walked around the streets with their faces uncovered and decked out in stylish European fashion. American tourists walked the streets with impunity. The street name for the gooey, pungent patties of old-time hashish was "Primo". Afghan Primo. It had an easily-identifiable, skunky smell. It was by far the best smoke Iowa City had ever seen to that point in the cultural revolution. I prospered with the Primo, and my niche in that underground lifestyle became secure. I had the hash. The good stuff.

My friend, Clifton Middleton, whom I'd initially met by selling him some of the compressed, psychoactive patties, was a member in good standing of the hippie community at that Big Ten campus. The University of Iowa. He introduced me to the multitude of long-haired freaks and braless beauties. Cliff and I traveled quite a few paths together over the years. His wife, Jackie, and my wife, Judy, became fast friends immediately. One time we all traveled together, along with a dozen or so other hippies, on a weeks-long school bus ride to New York City. Like Ken Kesey and The Merry Pranksters. Not something any sane

person would want to do twice. Or even once. A short time after that, Cliff and I toured the West Coast in his old, radiant blue Ford panel truck trying to find some intangible mystery or some mesmerizing drugs. After a brief pause in our quest for nothing, we flew to London where we stayed for more than a month trying to set up a reliable source for hashish, so we'd be able to smuggle some back to the good old U.S.A.

As we felt out the scene in London, we naively smoked up a very short (5'-2" wannabe FBI agent) undercover cop. He toted around an enormous Napoleon complex. His height, or lack thereof, had actually prevented him from being accepted into the elite U.S. investigations agency (FBI), of which he had so passionately longed to become a member. It may have been the source of his vehement distaste for anyone over 5 feet tall ... and American. We fit that description. He'd been able to arrest me because I'd been the one possessing the odiferous nugget of an illegal substance in a small leather pouch tied to my belt. He'd had to let Cliff go in spite of his reluctance to do it. We'd had some Lebanese hash stashed under the wooden steps back at our flat in Earl's Court. Napoleon hadn't gotten that, though.

The London caper was my first encounter with the law and the authorities over the mystical properties of cannabis. Mystical in the sense that I was totally captivated by it. After my arrest and a night in jail, they'd taken me to the Old Bailey Courthouse where I had to appear before a panel of judges. They were all dressed in black robes and were wearing white wigs on their wrinkled up old noggins. No shit! It was a scene from a Sherlock Holmes movie. I'd plead guilty to possession of a controlled substance and been fined 200 pounds Sterling. A British pound was worth \$2.40 U.S. at the time. So they got me for 480 bucks and about an ounce of good, blonde hashish.

We flew to Gibraltar for a couple of days, and then on to Tangier aboard an old DC-3. In a shoddy, rented Peugeot, we drove all up and down the coast of Morocco sampling the local kief (the pure and clean collection of cannabis trichomes from marijuana buds and flowers), the tasty Mediterranean cuisine, and absorbing some of the North African culture. In the end, we sent home a few big boxes stuffed with paper-thin, gauzy Moroccan shirts that had colorful embroidery around the neckline and sleeves, some long-stemmed, hand-painted kief pipes, a few ancient, intricately-woven leather pouches and various other incidental trinkets for a store, Al Raffa, which we intended to open up in the heart of the hippie hub back in Iowa. But we were only able to smuggle a small quantity of some beautiful blonde Lebanese hashish. We also sent a plaster-of-Paris bust of George Washington stuffed with a less-delightful grade of the cannabis resin. We went back to Earl's Court for another week, and then we flew back across the Atlantic and on to Iowa City.

Once the Afghani hash ran out (which it did sometimes because the supply was intermittent), I started buying and selling moderate quantities of marijuana. Some of it was very good and some was commercial grade, but weed was scarce back then, so it was always easy to sell. I flew to Atlanta or San Francisco on occasion to buy some because there wasn't any place in Iowa that I knew about to get more than a few ounces at a time.

Once, on a return flight from Atlanta, I was traveling with two friends, Cynthia and Nate. We had some mediocre merchandise in a suitcase that I'd checked at the baggage counter. On the final leg of the flight to Cedar Rapids I fired up a joint. Right in the passenger cabin. I honestly thought almost everyone smoked weed and were just keeping that fact close to the vest because of the draconian laws. The smell wafted. Cigarettes could be smoked during flights back then if the "No Smoking" sign wasn't lit up. The stewardess came up to me and whispered through clenched teeth, "You put that out right now! I know what that is! If you ever do it again on my flight, I will call the police." I put it out. Such audacity was unbelievable. Another time Nate and I were heading for San Francisco. The plane had to stop for a short time in Omaha. We hadn't had to deplane. We were sitting in first class. I fired one up. La-Di-Da! That time the plane crew was not so understanding. The cops came before I was able to finish the joint. "You're under arrest!" They took us off the plane and charged us. Nate's father was a District Court Judge in Iowa City. They looked in the empty suitcase I had checked. Empty except for a few seeds rolling around inside from a previous stunt. Audacious ... and stupid! But that's how I rolled. Nate was reading 'The Urantia Book' at the time. It's a collection of philosophical concepts and interpretations relating to Christianity and the universe which offer a broader, more comprehensive view than traditional religions. It sounded like horse manure. And it was! The supermortals involved identify as extraterrestrials. Nate's argument was so outrageous that they just fined us \$100 each and put us on the next flight to San Francisco. That arrest, by the way, is indelibly recorded on my rap sheet. I suspect it's on Nate's as well.

Based on a concept we'd seen in London, Cliff and I started a New Age shopping mall in the heart of downtown Iowa City. We rented the old Montgomery Ward building on College Street, which had been condemned for urban renewal, and converted it into "River City Free Trade Zone" over the course of the summer. The hippie-capitalist business venture opened in the autumn of 1970. Psychedelics and hard drugs were plentiful. There were wild parties and several spontaneous adventures to the rock quarry near Atalissa for drunken, nude frolics in the deep, cold water. We had many good times and high adventures. We tried to corrupt ourselves as much as we possibly could. Booze, drugs, nakedness and sex dominated our days and nights. At the time, Judy and I lived in an old, isolated farmhouse on the County Line Road between Johnson County and Muscatine County. Jennifer had been born on April 25, 1968, prior to my plunge into

the long-haired culture, so we were an anything-but-typical family of four. The Christian moral standards of our Midwest upbringing became passe and almost laughable and, subsequently, the subject of great derision. It was a period of extreme decadence for me. I had the pedal to the metal.

The Articles of Incorporation for the River City Free Trade Zone venture were filed with the State of Iowa under the name "Primo Energies, Ltd.". The enterprise was a conglomeration of thirteen separate shops, two mezzanine offices, a specialty restaurant (Clyde's LSD Palace - which was Cliff's creation), a free medical clinic (my sister, Geraldine, and brother-in-law, Paul, who was a student in the University of Iowa Medical School were the main impetus for it), and a spacious music venue in the basement for concerts and ribald reverie. And it was all under one roof. Three stories of hedonistic hippiedom. Alice in Wonderland on steroids.

After a productive opening several months and a prosperous holiday season, life around River City became mundane. Whatever the trend, we'd already done it. I began hearing stories about a tropical island paradise - Jamaica - and about the distinctive qualities of that island's marijuana, the ganja. I also got wind of an extraordinary character, a guy known as Brother Ivy. He had a gospel camp east of Kingston near Papine known to the locals as Hall's Delight. I was curious enough to make the trek down there to see for myself. It was March 9, 1971. A few of us had watched the first Ali-Frazier fight at a house in Miami the night before I, alone, flew to Jamaica. That's how I remember the date so clearly.

My flight landed at Norman Manley International Airport in Kingston. As I exited through the passenger doorway out onto the portable aircraft stairway, the magnitude of the tropical heat was staggering, momentarily leaving me breathless. I had just left Miami, which is tropical, too, but the air in hell was measured and stifling. I found a taxi and passed along the directions for my destination to the driver. My initial exchange with Jamaican Patois must have been comical to my chauffeur, but he managed to let me know that he knew exactly where I was going. News of white Americans snooping around somewhere in the hills of East Kingston spread fast on the small Caribbean island. The cab driver delivered me to the top of a hill and pointed me toward the trail that led to where I was going. Everything about Jamaica was fascinating to me. The thick sweltering air, the plush beauty of tropical flowers and fruit trees, open-air crudely-constructed food stands, goats and colorful chickens intermingling in the streets along with homemade carts and bicycles and vehicle traffic, all moving slowly on narrow winding roads. It was very unfamiliar and new to me. Enchanting. I bought a bottle of Red Stripe and guzzled the cool beverage to quench my thirst. Then with my meager grip (the Jamaican terminology for suitcase) in hand, I started off on the trail my cabbie had pointed out to me. A couple small, barefooted children took my bag, and,

chattering words I did not understand, skipped along beside me, guiding me over the stony trail. A slightly downward slope to a stream bed and then up again.

We came upon a small group of men toiling to finish up a fowl coop. They intended to increase the chicken and egg production for the camp. One of the glistening black guys asked me, "Who are you?" Then, "Who sent you here?" And finally, "Who did you come here to see?". So I answered the questions. I said I'd heard a lot about a man named Brother Ivy, and it had all been good. I had come to meet him. A sinewy, red-skinned Jamaican guy said that he was Brother Ivy. He had a very noticeable, rugged-looking profile along the left side of his face. Later, as I became more familiar with the people and the patois inflections of their lilting language, I learned that Ivy was often referred to as "Jawbone" by many of the locals in and around the camp. Sometimes, it was shortened to "Bone". I don't know for sure if his slight disfigurement was the origin of the nickname, or not, but Brother Ivy was definitely the "Bone". No doubt about it! Center stage. He lit up our tiny cosmos. And then he lit up a long clay pipe full of fine ganja and passed it to me. "Louv, beloved", he said to me in a dialect clear enough for me to understand. I took the pipe, put it to my lips and inhaled the biggest draw I could manage. I drank in the vibrations of what certainly felt like, to me, holiness, a concept about which I knew nothing, The new wine of the new covenant. That was the beginning of a life-altering, lifelong adventure.

The church building was a very primitive structure erected from a combination of native wood and used scraps of lumber of various dimensions. Recycled sheets of corrugated metal (Jamaicans call it "zinc") served as a roof. The benches and the lectern inside were all made from laboriously hand-hewn boards. But the most distinctive part of the whole scene, to me, were the hand-painted odd-sized signs adorning the temple walls. Some were biblical quotes; some were blurbs of ancient wisdom passed down through the ages. One of the placards in particular said, "All things have value as they are viewed in light of His authority. Jesus is the Son of Goud." Note the spelling, G-O-U-D. And the word love was spelled L-O-U-V. The word J-E-S-U-S was pronounced differently from the inflections and tones I had heard all my life when referring to the Son of God. I had always heard and said "Jee-zes". For the first time in my life, I heard that name pronounced "Jes-us". How significant would that pronunciation and the specifics of its meaning be? Well ... in many ways that's the crux of my story.

The congregation of local peasants were dirt poor. They were simple-living folks. Their history was one of slavery, followed by generations of demeaning treatment from the Colonial bourgeois who had governed the tiny Caribbean island for a few centuries. Their Christian services were a mixture of prayers and celebration. Psalms were recited daily from memory. There were spiritual hymns, kumina drums

accompanied by dancing, reading of scriptures and a few select tomes, and often there were very inspired “reasoning sessions”. There was only one focus: the spirituality of mankind and humanity’s fall from grace. A literal understanding of the history of the relationship between God and man, primarily using the Bible, with the “Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey” and the Christian allegory entitled “Pilgrim's Progress” as our references of focus. Garvey had been a World War I-era political activist and Jamaican National Hero whose ideas and writings spawned Pan-Africanism. “Africa for Africans, those at home and those abroad” was his theme. And, of course, we had to use our own experiences in life to balance the equation. Primarily, our easy slide into the quagmire of “the sins of the flesh”. But what set the group apart from any other denomination on Earth that I had ever seen or heard about was the fact that their sacrament was the intoxicating herb. Marijuana. Ganja. All of the above! The herb was the Eucharist of this unpretentious order. They smoked copious amounts of the stimulating substance throughout their services, and throughout the day, in either clay chillum pipes or fat hand-rolled, tobacco-laced spliffs. “And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.” I wasn’t aware of it at the time, but the notion that marijuana had both medicinal and spiritual properties had been part of human inquiry and consciousness for a few millenia.

Ivy had a revolutionary and different perception of the interpretation of this verse. All the countless mysteries associated with my Catholic upbringing immediately seemed to become clear to me in light of that unexpected revelation. Absolutely! Ganja was the “new wine” of the New Covenant. The wine signified Christ’s own blood poured out to seal God’s covenant with believers in Him. How could humanity have missed such an obvious enlightenment to that long-standing enigma. “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.” Throughout all of my experiences of ritually taking the small, round wafer that the Catholic Church referred to as Holy Communion, I had never felt what I considered to be divine inspirations, but one puff of the scorned ganja overwhelmed me. I sensed and felt a beatific bliss. With those astonishing revelations to shine light on it, my awakening to a completely new and mystifying concept had set me free in some inexplicable way.

When I arrived up the hill at the gospel camp, there were four other American white guys staying as guests. Brother Tommy and Brother Alan were the most notable right off. They had both been rendered immobile from infectious tropical fungus lesions on their legs, and they were sitting forlornly in the very back of the temple with unsightly open sores wondering, “What the hell is going on?” Two more brothers, Gary and Herbie, were also encamped on the hillside, having overstayed their standard 3-week tourist visas.

Brother Ivy exuded a different kind of aura than any I had ever encountered before that moment. Or, as it has turned out, since then as well. There was an implicit narrative taking place under the surface at the remote outpost. It was a revelation to me, the reenactment of ancient biblical events and the resurrection of storied scriptural characters. And there was only one visible entity around which everything else orbited. Ivy. He was the epicenter of that microcosm. The white guys were talking about the phenomenon unfolding before us. They had figured out that Ivy vibrated like no other. Almost immediately, I figured it out too. Ivy was the personification and the fulfillment of all prophecy. There was no uncertainty. The manifestation was clear to all of us. Ivy possessed that celebrated spirit. Each hour of every day revealed wisdom and understanding we had previously been blinded from perceiving through our own uncleanness and transgressions. Consciousness seemed to wash over us like water over Union Falls in Yellowstone National Park. The ability to grasp the meaning of scriptural information and the capacity to apply that comprehension to make sound judgments and decisions.

Previously unfathomable snippets of the ancient discernment of scripture and human history overwhelmed me with each passing moment, like being born again. The simplicity and rationality of these revelations astonished me...over and over again. I drank in the waves of consciousness like a parched waif. The white brothers explained to me that life begins at the end of confession. My only grasp of confession was the dark, mysterious confessional box at the back of the Catholic Church where I'd grown up. Immaculate Conception in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. But that ritual had become rather hollow for me because there were things that I had never acknowledged to the shadowy voice on the other side of the opaque screen. But with Ivy I just told him a couple of my seemingly most egregious offenses. He simply told me to splash a little water over my head from the hand washing receptacle outside the temple, and then read Psalm 119. That gracious gesture freed me from the otherwise indistinguishable heaviness I carried around like an albatross. Was my perception real or imagined? In any event, the confession ritual of our journey to spiritual fellowship somehow transformed, after Ivy died, from a very real liberation into a sinister implement of subjugation and control.

There was a logical explanation for all the supernatural deeds and miracles attributed to the astonishing Son of Goud. He raised Lazarus from spiritual death caused by sin. And mankind is the Living Water. So He walks on the head of every man and every woman. Thus, walking on water. He put back the soldier's ear when Peter had lopped it off with the sword. The sword being the Word of God, and Peter had given the soldier a vicious tongue-lashing. Jesus had soothed the sting of the reprimand with mercy. So it was. As we smoked and reasoned, Ivy's message became clearer. Sin had caused mankind to fall repeatedly into the wallows of deception and nastiness. The descendants of slavery were actually the children of Israel,

and black people, whom he had come to realign to the basic Commandments of God, were, indeed, the most treacherous of all the various races of humanity. Like crabs in a barrel. As soon as one appears to be getting close to the top of the barrel, the other crabs pull it back into the abyss. The white people were the Gentiles, the historical enslavers of Israel, after the people had fallen again and again into the quagmires of wickedness. Religion, politics and commerce were the three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. We always referred to that as Babylon. And the modern-day Babylon was, to us, the seventh and final symbol of worldly power and corruption, following Egypt, Syria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Rejection of godliness was championed by the two-headed, red-white-and-blue worldly oppressor, America and England. The big sister and the little sister. Ivy's message and his animated teachings possessed undeniable Divine Authority. His indisputable declaration was the magnet that captivated those of us who heeded his entreaty. God incarnate, man divine.

Young, middle-class white people from America came to sit in the dust at the feet of King Rastafari to learn the wisdom of the ancients. To us, the name Rastafari represented the seventy-second and final Advent of the Holy Spirit on Earth. It had nothing to do with the Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, whom we always considered to be, as Marcus Garvey had described him, the Cowardly Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Haile slunk off to Europe in 1936 after Italy had invaded Ethiopia in late 1935. We always derogatorily referred to his Dreadlock enthusiasts as "ropeheads" and considered their doctrine to be just another distraction among countless other counterfeit religions. With each passing day, Ivy imparted a real understanding of holiness to us, and the will and determination to adopt that lofty character unto ourselves. Ivy was the one who possessed that "certain something" which had momentarily transfigured him into a barefoot, bearded ganjaman. Jehovah Adonai!

After about a week, word leaked down through the local grapevine that the 'lice (the cops, po-lice) were going to raid the camp because of reports of white people with repulsive, open sores and questionable visas. Brother Shine took Tommy and Alan up to his place a short distance away into the hills because they could barely move. Gary went back to the U.S. Herbie and I went with Keith and Rupee up to the country to remain out of the clutches of Satan. That's how we looked at it.

On the way to Trelawny, we stopped at a used car lot. Keith knew the owner, Karem, an Arab/Jamaican businessman. We bought one of the least expensive cars on the lot. Dougie drove off in Keith's shabby mint-green and yellow Chevy pickup to take care of some other business, and the rest of us took off for Crown Land Road in the much shabbier new purchase. About halfway to our destination the

right rear tire went flat. Amid a barrage of “blood clots” and “Ras clots”, the cause of the flat tire was attributed to Herbie who was riding in the right rear passenger seat directly above the deflated wheel. I couldn't understand everything that was being said, but it quickly became clear that poor Herbie was carrying around some kind of ancient, bumbaclot curse. Thus the flat tire. I hadn't really known Herbie prior to our chance encounter at the gospel camp, but I was glad it was him and not me who was ridin' dirty. After a day or so at the remote, mountainous agricultural plot, Herbie had heard enough about how evil he was. He left for Montego Bay and flew back to Chicago. I never saw Herbie again. As it turned out, lucky him! Kootman, Rupee, Keith and I spent a couple days at the isolated hilltop farm planting yams, bananas, gungo peas and digging trenches horizontal to the steep hillside to prevent erosion. We spent the nights in Sister Mama's two-room wooden house up near the road. No facilities at all, but we made do. That's how the poor people lived.

On our return trip to Papine, we stopped for the night at Keith's house on Barbican Road in Kingston. Lower Barbican, which was aptly named. That's where I met Phyllis, Keith's wife, for the first time. She had recently been released from prison where she had served about a year for a ganja offense that belonged to Keith. She had stood up to the forces of evil and didn't give up her man to the authorities, which meant everything to Keith. Phyllis was reluctant to let me use their shower (which was just a pipe running up the bathroom wall with a short right angle at the top) because I was a white man, a sight rarely seen in that neighborhood, which made me suspect. But Phyllis finally relented when she realized I was just a goofy white boy caught up in the spiritual miasma surrounding her husband and his brethren. So I got to take a much-needed shower. In our absence, the cops had come to the camp at Papine, but they'd had to leave empty-handed. They'd found no one except the poor locals.

During my remaining time with Ivy, I came to understand life from a very different perspective. For a space in my consciousness I was elevated to a very real and all-encompassing purity. My soul was cleansed. My guilt disappeared (in my own mind) and the grasp of any awareness or knowledge about Christ and the scripture became awakened and alive through this guy, Ivy. Preposterous? It's impossible for me to acknowledge that perspective because I had experienced something both real and profound. It couldn't just be faith since I'd actually been a live character in that unfolding melodrama. Meanness, impurity and temptation, at least momentarily, had no power over me. Rational? Not even close! It was a miracle. The leaders of religion, politics and commerce held the people captive in sin. “And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”

Before I left the camp to return to America, Ivy sent for me one afternoon. I went up to the outdoor kitchen area, which was just a stone fireplace where they cooked in big steel pots on open fires under a zinc roof. Ivy was sitting away from the fire. Sister Blossom was washing his foot, which had an open wound on the bottom. We talked for a while, and then he systematically showed me each of his stigmata, with a short, yet detailed, explanation for each. Ivy's navel was a shiny elongated scar. Around his neck appeared to be scarred, too, and his jawbone was noticeably deformed. Just enough to support his explanation. Those were the markings of a hanging, ripping the navel up and to the left. The neck and jaw disfigurements evidenced the rope. His hands each bore uneven scars that lent credence to the nails, as did the markings on his feet, one of which Blossom was washing in a pan of warm water and healing herbs. It all seemed logical and indisputable. And very real. I was already convinced at that point. The very existence of stigmata simply validated what I had already discerned over the previous days.

Ivy had no real source of income to support the camp, but he and a few of his old-time brethren tried to smuggle some ganja up to America on occasion, but there had been very little success. And what miniscule proceeds made it back to the island were always contested. Who gets what, and how much? But Ivy, along with Keith's and a few other brothers' assistance, managed to feed and provide for the parade of soul-searching white folks who began showing up at the camp. No one had ever seen or done anything even remotely close to what had manifested on that innocuous island hillside. Ivy was able to impart unto us a real sense of holiness, a tangible certainty that we were irrevocably connected to the purity of Goud. Adhering to the tenets of our doctrine, we strictly followed the Old Testament laws, primarily the Levitical laws defining spiritual and dietary cleanliness. The resolve to live life free from moral offense was exhilarating, a rebirth. I stayed in Jamaica for the full 3-week length of my visa. Before Winston Williams drove me to the airport, I gave the remainder of the \$5,000 U.S. that I'd gone down there with, hoping to buy some marijuana, to Keith. It was more than two grand. I told Ivy about the money, and he was cool with it. Ivy seemed to trust Keith as much or more than any of the other Jamaican brethren. Then with Ivy's blessing, I returned to the U.S. to tell my wife, my children, my parents, my siblings, and anyone else who may cross my path, exactly what I had discovered.

The first place I went when I got back to Miami was the same house where we'd watched the Ali-Frazier fight the night before I departed for the exotic island. Two brothers, Howard and Bobby, who had both previously spent a little time at the camp near Papine, were astonished at the transformation I had

undergone. I was alive like never before. I radiated Ivy's purity and urgency. The next morning, I woke up the brothers for oblation, an early morning liturgy reciting psalms in unison from memory. I hadn't actually looked at the Bible for assistance, but I was somehow able to learn, by rote, the prayer service in less than three weeks. It may not seem like much, but to me, and to the ones who witnessed it, my transfiguration had been complete. In a spiritual sense, I was on fire.

I hitchhiked back to Iowa City with no money at all. Not a dime. I had happily divested myself of that burdensome load. Everyone who gave me a ride along the way got an earful of my fervent, evangelistical awakening. Even the Highway Patrol Officer in Ohio, who had stopped and checked me out along the shoulder of I-75 while I was hitchhiking through his state, sampled my zeal and my sincerity. I slept for a few hours on the floor in one of the Howard Johnson's restaurants at a Service Plaza spanning I-80 in Illinois. Some kind soul gave me a dime the next morning to call Judy. Collect. She came and picked me up. She couldn't believe what I was saying, nor what had happened to me.

At first, she was totally freaked out and didn't want to hear any of the profound new logic I was espousing with every breath. Especially the enlightening moral interpretation of my argument. Fleshly indulgences had been our choice and our delight up to that point. She remained aloof from the whole notion of what I was saying. For the first few days back in Iowa, I sought out everyone I had known and proclaimed my astonishing new discovery to them. My parents, my in-laws, my siblings, my friends and even complete strangers if they happened to intersect my orbit. A few days after my return, Brother Gary showed up in Iowa City. I was in the midst of heralding my amazing message to some of the shop owners at River City when I saw Gary crossing the street. Prior to the time we'd found ourselves together at the gospel camp in Jamaica, we hadn't known each other. But the oneness we shared because of our mutual experiences with Ivy was sacred beyond anything we could have imagined. Our dialog was intense and incredibly beatific. When I brought Gary back to the old farmhouse where we lived, Judy actually hid from us in the dusty, dank cellar for almost two days, until finally she began to grasp what we were attempting to tell her about. I had also told her that I was going to go back to Jamaica as soon as I could, no matter what, and that I very much wanted her and the kids to come with me. But I also told her that she would have to make that decision for herself. At that point, I think she did just that.

I'll tell you about another incident that may lend some perspective to the intensity of my focus. My good friend, Don, was a very skeptical and cynical kind of guy. He wasn't taken in by much. Young girls and money, yes, but not much else. We had a good history of association during our relatively short acquaintance. We had attended the same high school for a short time, but we really didn't know each other

yet. We'd been friends at Muscatine Community College, a hub of debauchery and unrestrained lifestyle. He had been one of the groomsmen in our wedding. He'd been my connection to the Afghanistan Primo. And at that moment, he and his brother, Tony, owned and operated a Persian rug store at River City. So we were thick.

I remember the scene. We were sitting in my Ford van at Bever Park, a nice family recreation spot in Southeast Cedar Rapids. The park was close to his family's home and near my parents' place, too. We had both lived on the cutting edge of decadence for a long time, so the topic of our conversation that day was not something we had ever discussed prior to that moment. I told him what I had discovered and some of the new perspectives and understandings I had arrived at regarding the foundations of many of the values we'd been taught all of our lives. Don was from a Lebanese family. Very clannish. They were Orthodox Christians, similar to my Catholic upbringing, except for the Pope. Even though I hadn't known it prior to that point, Don had very strong feelings about Christ. His mother had given him a small gold cross that he wore around his neck on a thin gold chain. All the time. It had the emotional significance for him of a sacred relic. At that time, I wasn't trying to convince anyone of anything. I was merely relating, in a very intense manner, what I had seen, what I had heard and what I'd felt after my adventure in Jamaica. After a very impassioned reasoning session, Don actually tore the cross from around his neck and threw it out the window into the grass like it was an offending albatross. When we drove off, it was still in the grass. I don't see how he ever could have recovered it, so I knew he had been quite moved by the story I was relating to him. Don did go down to Jamaica almost immediately after that with another friend of ours, but they were gone from the camp by the time I returned to Papine. I don't think I ever saw Don again after that.

By that time though, I had told everyone in sight what I'd stumbled upon. Cliff was ready to go down to Jamaica immediately. Even though he was married to Jackie, his traveling companion in those days was Sister Sarah. Not that Sister Sarah! Sarah was a saucy, winsome adventuress from Iowa City. They hitchhiked to Florida, where Judy, the kids, and I hooked up with them at a remote hammock in the Everglades. Unthinkable now, but the six of us spent almost a week living in a thatch-roofed treehouse that Sarah and Cliff had cobbled together from available indigenous materials (i.e. palmetto fronds, saplings and vines) before we arrived. They were living across from the old Monroe Station outpost near Loop Road on the Tamiami Trail. They were over a mile deep into the historic swamp. Ochopee, Florida.

By the time we were ready to fly south, our group had grown to a couple of dozen. I'd decided to burn out a couple credit cards that I had accumulated, so I began buying airline tickets with abandon. Our number was growing. Judy got a chance to meet Ivy. She probably didn't have the exact same perspective

of the people and events as I did, but she definitely knew she had encountered some mysterious, transcendent ambience that had touched us all so deeply. Jawbone. We had all become illuminated by his spiritual aura. There were many memorable moments during that short excursion in Papine. One sleepy afternoon while the sun blazed overhead, Jennifer, who was 3 years old, went up the hill to the 2-holer outhouse. By herself. She has always been independent and headstrong. Well, she perched her tiny little heinie on the edge of one of those holes, but her skinny behind was so meager that she dropped right through the opening into the murky latrine pit below. Ugh!! Miraculously she'd been able to keep her head above sea level. Someone heard her cry for help. Several Jamaican brothers and sisters rushed up there to help. But she was out of reach. Frantically, they thought about tearing the little shanty down so they could get to her. Brother Jack, a mild-mannered and humble Jamaican guy, got several people to hold his legs and feet while he went in headfirst to rescue her. A real hero. Everybody hailed him up. I didn't hear what had happened until Jenny was back above ground safely and Judy, with the help of several Jamaican sisters, was tearfully washing the mud off her daughter. Those were tears of joy and relief. When they'd asked Jennifer what had happened, she'd replied innocently, "I fell in the mud". That incident has always been remembered by everyone who was there that day. The day Jennifer fell in the mud. Prior to departing the camp at the end of our 3-week visas, Brother Ivy gave a small plug of ganja to Judy. He told her to put it in her bra, that way Customs wouldn't bother her. And they didn't. Then, he said, we'd have a little something to smoke when we touched down in Miami. And we did. Old memories can be very nostalgic.

Back in the U.S., our celestial cosmic attracted plenty of people. Iowa City became the geographical epicenter for those of us who felt the gravitational power of Ivy's resurrection. Some of us had been to the camp near Papine to see Ivy, and some hadn't. But all those who'd heard of that extraordinary character, Ivy, but hadn't actually met him, were similarly affected by his incredible vibrancy. We were all financially challenged. Broke as bums. Yet we were inexplicably drawn together by a very real magnetism.

In July, 1971 the news came up to our tattered band of vagabonds in Iowa that Brother Ivy had died. He was rumored to have been poisoned, which was likely the cause. No one used the word dead to describe his passing. We simply said he had "departed". But he was dead. Some things in life are impossible not to see, in our own consciousness. My initial perception of Ivy's persona lingers.

Judy, me and the kids all went down to Papine one more time. Big Bob and Sister Kathy, Sal, Mike Matteson and Leslie, Cliff and Jackie, and several other obsessed souls accompanied us. It just wasn't the same without Ivy. The phrase "chicken with its head cut off" comes to mind. There was a contentious tug-of-war among the unholy band of black brothers over who would ascend to the office of High Priest.

Obviously, none of the wannabes vying for the elusive role came even remotely close to Ivy's charisma and the unspoken authority of his persona. And no one could think right. The doctrine of that obscure group had previously hinged on decrying the wickedness of the slave-master white race. Most of those poor, island inhabitants had never experienced any meaningful interaction with their oppressors. White folks. Ivy had smashed that preconceived animosity by accepting the white brothers and sisters as his brothers and sisters. No difference here. That concept had previously been inconceivable. And after Ivy died, the centuries-old animosities between the races resurfaced and couldn't be bridged. The heart had been removed from the body. Superstitions abounded. Nothing but flailing in the throes of expiration remained, an endless fountain of scriptural platitudes and vain posturings.

The white people all soon returned to the U.S. where we wandered nomadically for months, not really understanding what to do nor what had happened. We had all experienced a life-altering, unfamiliar awakening. We were fledgling souls trying to understand the enigma of the man Ivy. Something held us together though. *Je ne sais quoi*.

3 Beginning to smuggle, Jawbone

Back in the U.S. the brothers and sisters clung together in total poverty. We were lost. A body with no direction. We roamed from the farm near Iowa City, Big Bob's place, that Judy, the kids and I had once inhabited to a small house and yard Jacob had rented in Coralville, Iowa. Then, like gypsies, we traveled in a caravan (a big old school bus for the women and children and several other satellite vehicles for the rest of us) to an isolated cabin in Saluda, North Carolina, that belonged to a friend of a friend, for several weeks. We would have stayed longer, but the locals got nervous and very suspicious of our lifestyle and tone of our gospel and put up a fuss. A big fuss. After a few warnings, a couple of gunshots rang out late one night to urge us on down the road. We got the hint. We then moved to a decent place on the water's edge in Fort Myers, Florida. Brother Marvin had rented a place there for us. We harbored an unrealistic fantasy that we could somehow smuggle in some herb at that place, but we were in no way set to do something like that. Sister Leslie remembers the escapade. She was along for the ride with her infant son, Ithiel, and her husband, Brother Michael. After an inconvenient episode of mass hysteria, Sister Cynthia selflessly and courageously smuggled back a small amount of excellent herb from Brother Keith, strapped to her body.

Initially, we were confused and divided about selling our sacramental herb. Tommy insisted it was a sacrilege to sell the body and blood. Too much Catholicism. There was more than a touch of hysteria that gripped us all before we managed to sort things out enough to even consider the option of marketing some of the ganja. Keith was urging us to think about a more down-to-earth existence. We couldn't just live on hot air alone, though we were trying. If we were to survive financially, we needed a source of income and stability, a way to restore some dignity to our lives. Even with our new, and often fanatical, understanding of Christianity, selling the herb was the only logical solution. Keith had continually counseled us to use the resources available to us. Finally, it became apparent we needed to obtain, transport, and then subsequently sell our sacrament. Nobody, not even Keith, could have foreseen that we would become a fearless, ganja-smuggling, money-making juggernaut. And, theoretically, to spread the Gospel. Yeah, right! But for me, the idea of moving the ganja was all the motivation I needed.

Sister Judy was an engaging brunette with a bottom as smooth as luminous, pearl-white silk. She had always been a steadfast, loving and patient wife who, beyond the sensibilities of normal emotions, loved me. Why? She would have to tell you that. Sister Cynthia, likewise, was Brother Nathan's true love and lifetime partner. And Sister Andy was Brother Marvin's delicate, sensitive soulmate. Those three ladies made up the initial trio of sanctified mules. S'mules! From a rented 2-story house near Florida International

University, we made a couple of moves through the Miami Airport. It wasn't much, but we hadn't been used to much up to that point, so actually we felt flush. Keith got some, we got some. The original agreement with regard to dividing up the proceeds from selling the herb had been 50-50. You get half, I get half. Seemed fair and was fair. At that time Keith was buying the herb for \$5 a pound. Marvin and Nathan worked out a scheme with a baggage handler at Kennedy International in New York, an old college acquaintance. If it was successful, the plan would have taken a lot of pressure off everyone.

The first try went as they had planned, and everyone got paid. Real smooth. But the second attempt didn't go so well. A suitcase with 90 pounds of sweet smoke crammed inside got knocked off enroute to Kennedy Airport. No people, just the suitcase. Of course, there were conflicting accounts about what had caused the failure. Keith was convinced that the suitcase had actually made it through, and that Marvin and Nathan had robbed the money. Prior to that time, Keith and several of the other poor Jamaicans who had attempted smuggling deals with white Americans had always gotten the short end of the stick. So Keith was very suspicious. He insisted Marvin and Nathan were thieves and scoundrels and enemies of the Church. Keith's argument prevailed against all logic. Two of the brightest stars in our limited galaxy of sycophants were snuffed out. Actually four counting the ladies. Keith had a very dominant spirit. It was impossible (for us, at least) to oppose his line of reasoning, and it became more and more difficult to do anything freely. If Keith made an error in judgment, we all made the same error in judgment. Brother Marvin went down in Coptic lore as an enemy of the Church and as a thief, a caricature of every cursed soul described in the scripture. Nathan was able to come back a few years later, but Keith never once recanted any of the vehemence he'd poured out upon their souls. I sure didn't see what the truth was as the whole drama was unfolding, but now I am certain Marvin was the good guy. Totally sincere. And Keith turned out to be wrong about him and about Nathan. Way wrong! Marvin loved and respected Brother Ivy, and he wasn't a thief. After that falling out, Keith's ganja moving apparatus had taken a major hit. I can't make any excuses because I did it. I gladly, and vainly, volunteered my family to take up the slack. Who, but me, would have made such a delirious decision? I could plead insanity, but that's no real defense. It doesn't even work in court. In my mind, I was on a preordained spiritual journey. I thought it was a valiant mission. For a minute there, Judy and I (and our children, Brian and Jennifer) were the only mules left braying.

A few notable things happened in the interim. Here's one. It was Christmas Eve, 1972. Brian and I were strapped up. We each wore weight-trainer corsets which were holding thin, flat, rectangular, pressed slabs of ganja close to our bodies. Brian had a jigsaw puzzle sealed with plastic in a cardboard box, which was actually a piece of pressed ganja. I had a box of Jamaican cigars, similarly sealed. It was another piece

of ganja. As we were going through Customs in Miami, things got dicey. The agent screening incoming passengers pushed a button under his station when we got there, summoning his supervisor. Apparently, the cigars from Jamaica had raised the red flag. When his boss walked up, the agent pointed to the cigars as the offending culprit. Who knows? But this is the way I saw it. Brian sensed something was going on. He was 6 years old. In his innocent child's voice he asked, "When are we going home, Papa?" It was the Christmas season. It's difficult for almost anyone (in the Christian realms, at least) not to feel some sense of kindness and compassion during Yuletide. There was a pregnant pause ... and then the supervisor waved us through. There was no doubt in my mind that the Holy Spirit had momentarily put it in the man's heart to do His will, and had shone brightly upon us. I said a few Psalms. More than a few, actually.

Another time, Judy and Brian were making a move through O'Hare International in Chicago. They were trying to catch a flight to Iowa after having brought in several pounds through Customs. Judy was carrying the luggage and Brian, about 7 years old, was dragging a Teddy Bear stuffed with (you guessed it) ganja. They both had the body packages strapped on. Jennifer too. Their flight had gotten in a little late, so they'd had to hurry to the next gate for their connection. Brian was already weary from carrying the damn teddy bear all day. But they were in a hurry. He had to suck it up. No other choice. Just do it. So he did. With the body packages pinching him under the snug, weight-trainer belt, he struggled every step of the way to keep up with his mother. But they made it. And on to Iowa with the payload. Even the "bredren", with all their pomp, would have had a difficult time completing that mission.

One more adventure for Judy and Jennifer. On a return flight to Jamaica after one of their moves, a would-be hijacker cornered one of the stewardesses with a knife held to her throat. He'd wanted the plane to land in Cuba. The drama went on for several minutes before a couple of courageous passengers jumped him. They'd subdued him until the plane had landed. The hostage-stewardess had suffered a knife wound on her arm. Otherwise, all was well.

During that same time frame, I was up at the property in Trelawny Parish with Keith, Dougie and Kootman. We were doing some farming and some praying. At that point, those guys were the three most prominent elders in the Church. Brother Wally hadn't shown up yet, so the time frame had to have been fall of 1972. We were sitting in the rough-hewn temple building atop a high mountain peak of Crown Land. I was very limited in my ability to speak patois, but I could understand it enough to get by. We were reasoning and passing the kutchie pipe around. Some very pleasant-sounding melodies arose. Those guys could croon, no doubt about it. Somewhere in the middle of our reverie, Keith shouted out with spontaneous excitement, "We got the Bone!" And then he repeated it many times over during a several-hour session of divine

cogitation, reciting Psalms and singing chants. "We got the Bone!" I knew I understood that patois perfectly. And I believed it. They were black guys, which qualified them in my mind to have that divine connection. We thought Christ had been, and was, a black man and Ivy had validated that perception. I thought his succeeding brethren had the "Bone", that elusive mystique that I had witnessed and felt and received from Ivy. That's what I loved, and that's what I strove to be a part of, and to possess for myself. But at that moment, I really didn't feel like I, personally, had the "Bone". I was happy, though, that I knew the guys who did.

Years later, as I pondered both the people and events involved in our tiny spectacle, attempting to figure out what the hell happened, I realized that by Keith saying, "We got the Bone!", he had tacitly acknowledged that there actually was something very special about Ivy's spirit. He was the Bone. The Bone was real. But just because someone says, "We got the Bone", doesn't necessarily mean they got the Bone.

And here's another perspective emphasizing just how broke we were at the time, while it's on my mind. I'd come back to Jamaica from one of my solo airport moves. When I got to the airport, I took a taxi to Dougie's place in Bull Bay. He lived out that way with Elma. Brian once stayed there with them for several weeks, so he knew the kids and some of the neighbors around there. But what I remember most is that Dougie had to wait for me to get down to Jamaica with some cash before he could pay the Chinese pharmacist (in 9-mile, a Jamaican location near Bull Bay) for the pack of Craven "A" cigarettes we had mixed with the ganja. He hadn't even had enough money for a pack of cigarettes. The mixture was a mandatory ritual whenever we smoked, which was every waking hour. When we finally started "reasoning" again, Marvin and Nathan were still the most loathed enemies of God at that moment, so we spent most of the time conjuring up curses to heap upon them and their progeny. In retrospect, we did some pretty nasty stuff under the guise of righteousness.

4 The Little Conch

I remember after a solo move through one of the many airports we utilized for our smuggling adventures, I went up to Iowa City to sell my invaluable treasure. Some of the brothers and sisters who had previously been to the camp in Jamaica were hanging around the college town. That's where a lot of the lost sheep had gravitated after a debilitating episode of group insanity in Fort Myers, Florida. They were all broke and living like vagabonds. And at the same time, they were annoying the local hippies with endless pontification on the Law of Moses.

Clifton and Jackie wanted out of that quagmire of human quicksand. Judy, the kids and I needed a new address, too. Especially, once Marvin and Nathan had become pariahs to Keith and his toadies, of which I was numbered. So Cliff and I went together and rented a nice little place in Coral Gables. We lived there for many months, moving small amounts of herbs through the Miami Airport. Not much, but enough to minimally satisfy the growing aspirations of the Church in Jamaica.

Clifton got busted in April, 1972. He tried to get away, but the cops ran him down and wrestled him into submission outside the Customs terminal at Miami Airport. I posted bail for him, and he immediately skipped out on it, making him a Federal fugitive. At that point, we were recruiting as many of the other brothers and sisters as we could find to make the kamikaze missions into various airports. Mostly because we had no other way to do it. Some of them passed through our little safehouse in Coral Gables on the way to Jamaica. Some didn't. But over a span of more than a year, from many different places, we kept church finances afloat. And slowly expanded the operation. We were moving ganja from Sirgany Drive in Kingston, leaving from Norman Manley International Airport. Or we'd move it from Crown Land in Trelawney Parish, and leave from Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay. We'd fly to various locations in the U.S. and Canada. Any place where there was a direct flight from Jamaica. Miami, New York, Chicago, New Orleans and Windsor, Ontario. Dozens of brothers and sisters stepped up to the plate despite tremendous apprehension about the possible consequences. Tony Burns, Sarah, Mike Matteson, Susan, Tommy, Cordelia, Jackie, Cliff, Big Bob, Kathy, Don, Timmy, Alan, Bobby, Gary, Eileen, Chuck, Irene, Luther, Anna, Woody, Brad and Bright Eyes. And of course, Judy and me. And our two children, Brian and Jennifer. There were more, too, but I'm out of gas trying to remember everyone involved. Our

kids were the only adolescents who did what Brian and Jennifer did. Smuggle herb into the U.S. I realize now how reckless, irresponsible and insensitive I was to even consider something like that. At least I think I do. But I did it. I thought we were doing God's work to redeem Israel. And the Chosen People of Israel, by our interpretation of Scripture, were the long-lost African Children of God. After having experienced Ivy and discerning the sovereignty of His Spirit, I was absolutely convinced of it. There was no doubt in my mind. We'd been charged to do it.

Simultaneously, while we were moving our infinitesimal amounts through the airports, Brad and Don Rush, sibling rivals, were working diligently to resurrect a dilapidated, abandoned, 17-foot wooden-hulled fishing boat. That old skeleton was stuck on a sandbar within sight of the park in Coconut Grove. The boys just took it over, adopted it like a rescue hound from the dogpound. Diligently, on a negligible budget of nothing, they somehow managed to refit the relic and make it seaworthy. By some very questionable standards. Never underestimate the Rush brothers, though. A pair of very skillful, very resourceful and very brave sailors determined to sail that rejuvenated, old piece-of-junk fishing boat to Jamaica for a load of our cherished sacrament.

And that's what they did. The two of them. Along with another ancient character of high-minded intentions and mindless zeal. Howard Rosenbaum, a Jewish brother from Skokie. Those guys sailed the tiny craft, which they had fondly dubbed "Little Conch", south to Jamaica. Once there, they concealed 51 pounds of our precious Eucharist in a fabricated fiberglass hatch cover and set course for Florida. On the way back, they encountered rough seas in the Gulf. The storm increased in intensity until it became a hurricane. Agnes, I think. They took on water as they bounced around on the turbulent waters like a cork. Their only bilge pump was a cheap, portable device that had to be manually powered. Use your foot to pump it, pal. Howard wore most of the skin off his left foot from pumping the plastic contraption through the night, and really through the remainder of the storm. Somehow they made it and sailed into Naples, Florida in the aftermath of the storm. Then, they simply removed the hatch cover and passed it off to Tommy, a Catholic brother from suburban Dover, Massachusetts. Tommy drove it up to Boston where he was quickly able to convert the hatch into cash. Not too shabby.

The small wooden fishing boat became an inspiration and a symbol of unshakable courage and determination against all odds. The "Little Conch" had been up for the task. And the crew had selflessly manifested the necessary courage and devotion to cross over the River Jordan safely. Much rejoicing in Zion. That's how we saw it.

Both Rush brothers were Alpha dogs. But Don, the older of the pair, was calling the shots for the Church's new Naval Operations Wing. He was the captain. Don was later dubbed "Duppy", which is the Jamaican patois word for ghost. You can just imagine that guy's chops. Brad was an able and loyal First Mate. He had plenty of chops too. Brad later ascended to be captain on many of the boat moves.

It was time for the Navy to procure another vessel. The "Matilda". Clifton gives a good account in his book, "Ganja Warrior Priest", about how he obtained the 37-foot fiberglass motorsailer while he was on a mystical smuggling trip to New York. He traded a few pounds of ganja for the vessel. With the Matilda, our next move was more than 600 pounds. Don, Brad and Gary brought it in at a campground beach area near St. Teresa, Florida. Late one night, Clifton and I waited in a Skamper-brand RV. The boat arrived like clockwork at the prearranged time. They passed off the cargo to us using their dinghy in the shallow water to bring it ashore little by little. We gratefully hustled the herb to the Skamper and then drove it to a secluded place I'd rented near Crawfordville, Florida. We'd sunken a fiberglass coated plywood box into the overgrown yard and then stashed the whole load underground until we'd be ready to move it north. Fortunately, there was no drama that night. All glory, laud and honor, to thee Redeemer, King.

5 LaGuardia Customs, then off to jail

Early on in our crusade to “bring Israel out, laden with silver and gold, so there would be not one feeble person among us”, we made a move into New York City. January, 1972. Jackie and Cliff, Judy and me. We were carrying as much as we possibly could of the consciousness-altering substance. We sailed right through customs at LaGuardia. No problem. Once we got to the terminal, Judy went into one of the restrooms and systematically removed the contraband from her girdle. She put it in a small carry-on bag, which she passed off to me outside the ladies' room. She had a flight to catch back to Miami where she intended to pick up the kids and go north to see grandma and grandpa. Judy's parents, Mel and Elizabeth Campbell. Jackie, Cliff and I all had tickets to Iowa, where we planned to redeem our valuable cache for cash. Greenbacks.

I was in a hurry, as was often the case, and decided to carry the herb she'd given me onto the flight instead of waiting for a different flight where I could have checked it through. I felt like I could make it without any problems, because none of my other recent domestic flights employed that security precaution, checking passengers' carry-on bags. Hard to imagine that now. So I got in line to board the flight a couple of passengers ahead of Jackie and Cliff. When I got up to the screener, he took my carry-on for a closer look-see. And what did he see? Yep. It was stuffed to the very top with Judy's booty. Of course he'd wanted to know what was in the packages as he'd slowly torn the corner open on one of the paperback-book-sized parcels, exposing the herb.

So at that point, I went into a boisterous barrage of B.S., which to me at the time was all true. I told him it was ganja, the sacramental herb used in Jamaica for religious purposes. I huffed and I puffed and I thought for a minute I had blown the house down. Whatever I'd said had confused him enough so that he gave the packages of ganja back to me. I boarded the plane. With Judy's booty! Oh. yeah! God save the Queen.

Of course, Jackie and Cliff had seen the whole thing go down, and were incredulous as I passed by them. By then, they were in their assigned seats. They didn't even look at me, knowing something very suspicious was unfolding in the cabin of the Boeing 727. My euphoria didn't last long, though. The flight screener had pinched off a little piece of the herb before he'd allowed me to board the plane. Unbeknownst to me, of course. He'd given the sample to a plain-clothes airport security cop who quickly put a little fire

to it. He recognized the smell immediately. It was marijuana. No matter what that long-haired, long-bearded fruitcake was saying, that rascal had a bag full of marijuana.

The cops came on board, en masse, and escorted me off the plane. When they searched me down, they discovered I had more than 20 pounds altogether, counting what I had strapped to my body and what Judy had passed off to me a short time before. So it was off to the Queen's Detention Facility, my new home for the next week, until Cliff was able to raise enough money from selling part of his ganja to post my bail. \$1,000 was a lot of cash in 1972. As soon as my feet hit the pavement, I immediately absconded. At the time, that was simply the thing for us to do. We considered the U.S. to be the modern-day "Babylon the Great". We were determined to leave Babylon behind, both physically and spiritually. We had other things to accomplish.

There were a few memorable moments while I was in the dingy old jailhouse. Jail, as most people already know, is another world. It's not really like it's portrayed to be in the movies or on TV, but it's no cup of tea, either. Shortly after arriving in my assigned cellblock, I had to go through the process of introduction, which is pretty much standard universally. Who is this guy and what kind of horse crap might he be spouting? Most of the other inmates were black guys, which is the normal demographics of inner city jails, then and now. In those close quarters, everyone within hearing range will soon know your business. But my business in that setting was to confidently proclaim our doctrine. They all listened closely as I dissected the slavemaster's tactics and history. I'd lived among poor, street-wise Jamaicans whose very existence had been rife with poverty, oppression and crime. The inmates had to have wondered, "Who the hell is this white boy?" Was it possible that a "cracker" could understand the black man's plight? But I did. At least I thought I did. My obvious confidence and enlightenment had originated somewhere, somehow in Jamaica, the very pits of hell. Inevitably, those deep conversations regarding humanity's troubled history had to lead to conversation about the spiritual part of mankind.

We started talking about the Bible, which, at the time, was my forte. One guy, who appeared to be a shot-caller, mentioned that his favorite prayer was Psalm 27. Now we're talkin'! Psalm 27 was one of the more than twenty Psalms we recited from memory every morning during oblation. And twice on Sunday! We said Psalms day and night. Intercession. Pleading for God's mercy, forgiveness and guidance. And giving thanks. Psalms were our armaments against fear and evil forces everywhere. We were very familiar with Psalms. So without hesitation, I broke into a solemn recitation of Psalm 27. "The Lord is our light and our salvation, whom shall we fear?" Well, no one actually. It was smooth sailing after that. I had proved my mettle. I was a bonafide freak for a white dude.

The entire experience solidified my faith that we were doing the right thing. God's Will. When I made bail on the seventh day of my incarceration, I gave thanks, and then scooted down to Miami, leaving all of Babylon's woes behind. Temporarily, yes. But we believed otherwise.

6 U.S. Senator Harold Hughes

It was time for us to move the herb we had stashed near Crawfordville up to New England, and redeem it for some desperately needed cash. Three of us (Jacob, Tommy and I) packed what remained of it into a homemade plywood-and-fiberglass stash, which we'd hidden and secured underneath the Skamper. The Skamper was a nice rig. It was mounted on a Ford 350 heavy-duty frame. The comfortable camper had a small loft space above the truck cab for napping and a doorway right through from the cab into the camper. Cool runnin'. At some point along the way the original purpose for the trip took on a side mission. Three of the sisters had been busted coming through U.S. Customs. Sarah in New Orleans, Anna and Irene in Miami. They'd been loaded to the max with ripe bud. After their kamikaze-style attempts had been thwarted, the dedicated damsels were languishing in jail cells in the "Big Easy" and "The 305", respectively.

Jacob is a Jewish brother from Des Moines, Iowa who'd been transformed by Ivy up in Papine from a frat boy into a vibrant evangelist. Jake's parents had survived Nazi holocaust prison camps during World War II. His mother's arm had actually been broken by Adolf Eichmann, the chief executioner for the Fascist regime. Well, Jake somehow managed to set up an appointment with U.S. Senator Harold Hughes of Iowa, a powerful national political figure of that time. The former Iowa Governor and tough-as-nails truck driver was a reformed alcoholic and a deeply religious man. He was considered to be a dark horse contender for the Democrat Party's presidential nomination that year, 1972. Whoever won the nomination would be running for the highest office in the land against incumbent President Richard Nixon. "Tricky Dick". That was some very heady stuff.

Jake had known an inside connection to make contact with the Senator's office. Jake was an Iowan, so he would have been one of Hughes's constituents. However it happened, Jake got us an appointment with the United States Senator at the U.S. Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C. We were scheduled to discuss the purpose for our request when we got to the office. When we arrived at the appointed hour, we were escorted into Senator Hughes's chambers. We stated our original reason for requesting the appointment, but that point soon became moot when he told us straight away that helping the sisters out of their plight was beyond the scope of his influence. He could do nothing to disrupt the judicial process. But that minor obstacle did not end our audience with the influential legislator. No. That had just been a pathway introduction to the hallowed halls of government.

Our conversation with Senator Hughes was animated and focused on one premise: namely, we had found the resurrected Christ of the Bible in this dispensation. That's what we told him because that is precisely what we'd done. We had stumbled upon the real thing. When our allotted time came to an end, we all realized that our discussion had not come to that same end. We mutually agreed to meet again the next day and listened while Senator Hughes instructed his secretary to clear his schedule for the entire afternoon the next day. That would clear the way for more reasoning with the wild-eyed trio from Jamaica.

Senator Hughes was a big guy, tall, broad-shouldered and husky. He was a Christian. On the wall behind his substantial desk hung a huge, imposing oil painting of Christ created by one of his relatives, a testament to the public servant's faith. We talked and talked. It was not a typical political and religious dialog. We simply related to this guy the transcendency of our discovery. The time spent with Hughes was an exhilarating experience for all of us involved, including Hughes. We realized on a completely new level of comprehension that what we had to say was very real and legitimate, even in the inner chambers of Congress. Ivy's aura and incarnation dominated the discussion. That night, we slept in the Skamper in a Georgetown restaurant's parking lot. Up early the next morning, we said our Psalms, got some coffee and bagels, and then I walked around until I found what I was looking for. A big bookstore. I went in with a half-ass idea and an air of confident respectability. Posing as an Assistant Professor of Religion at Georgetown University, which was only a few short blocks away from where we were standing, I picked out a nice leather-bound, Red-Letter King James Bible for brother Dougie, one of the revered Church elders in Jamaica. Dougie had asked me to get him a good bible. I also added a green-covered paperback entitled "Philosophy and Opinion of Marcus Garvey" to my order. Then I simply charged the items to the Department of World Religions in the name of what I considered to be true religion. And finally, I signed the sales slip as Paul Bogle, another Jamaican hero in the black man's struggle up from slavery. It felt like one small blow for humanity's down-trodden.

I hooked back up with Tommy and Jake in time for our after-lunch appointment with the Senator. Unimaginable now because of so much violence and threats of violence, but I actually carried the Marcus Garvey book, a work which was second only to the Bible in defining the principles of our doctrine, and a small parcel of herb, our sacrament, into the historic confines of Congress. The United States Senate Office Building, where Hughes carried out the responsibilities of his position. Hours later, near the end of our exchange, I offered the respected politician the small plug of ganja I had brought along with me. Senator Hughes respectfully declined, but not before revealing to us some of his own legitimate personal paranoia regarding potential tricks by the CIA, or Republican operatives, to discredit, or even disgrace, him during

the election-year shenanigans. It wasn't long before Watergate broke out in D.C., which was a landmark blemish on the entire political system. But Senator Hughes did not freak out at my offer. He just said, "No".

We spent several hours that afternoon intensely deliberating a myriad of topics, but our focus always returned to the same monumental event we had witnessed. Namely, the resurrection of Christ. We were all totally consumed by that majestic manifestation, and it was foremost in our consciousness. Everything else was secondary. But moving ganja was slowly overtaking the fanatical zeal we exuded from having witnessed what we had witnessed. Three long-haired, bearded visionaries who were absolutely convinced that they had found Christ. And we told that seemingly preposterous story to a powerful government official who had been tuned-in enough to listen to us. In our minds, that fact alone further validated our conviction. Jes-us is the Son of Goud.

When we finally parted ways, the farewell was cordial and respectful. We exchanged mutual good wishes. But there's still one small fact that stands out to me as I recall that episode in our journey. Not once did we ever mention to Senator Hughes the name, "Ethiopian Zion Coptic Church". And the reason was simple. At that time, late Spring 1972, we hadn't actually heard that name ourselves. Yep! But in spite of that minor anomaly, the spirit we carried and the message we broadcasted were very much the foundation stones of an ancient Church. Call it what you will, that simple concept of Church is eternal.

What happened to the three sisters? Sarah had been busted in bayou country with a belly full. A pillow of ganja secured around her waist making her appear to be with child. She was wearing Judy's wedding rings as a prop to help validate her pregnancy. A little make-believe goes a long way. As the cops were booking her into the jail, they took the rings along with her other property. When she got out on bond, she wasn't able to recover the rings. But we were so dedicated to what we were doing that those kinds of minor inconveniences meant nothing to us. C'est la vie. Anna and Irene spent 10 days in the Dade County Jail waiting for someone to bail them out. Finally, one of the brother's parents put up the money. Anna had been traveling with her baby. The Court and Child Welfare Services took the small child away from her for the duration of her incarceration, for its safety and well-being. And her parents had to assist her in reclaiming her little one once she got out. We never saw Anna again after that unmitigated disaster. Upon her release, Sister Irene was immediately put back on the carousel. She resolutely returned to the mountain camp in Trelawny where she had to slog along the muddy trail for well over a mile just to get to the remote camp. There, she was loaded up again and then driven to Montego Bay the next day for a flight to New Orleans. She made it through that time. Nothing was more important than moving some herb to "The Land

of Plenty”. The voracious appetite of the small smuggling operation used up and tossed out many sincere souls. Git that money!

7 Nassau, Bahamas to Windsor, Ontario

Jackie, Cliff and their toddler daughter, Kali, got out of Iowa City just in time. They joined Judy, our kids and me in Miami. We needed a place, too, especially after Marvin and Nathan had gotten the bums' rush from Keith and, subsequently, the rest of us. Fortunately, we were able to rent a nice little spot in Coral Gables. 808 Majorca. And we needed transportation. Luckily, we found a luxurious 1966 Crown Imperial. But in early 1972, we got it cheap. It had roomy leather seats and a monster 440-cubic-inch V8. It was big enough for four adults and three children. Easy. We made a couple of moves through the airports, but we had to sell the herb in Iowa because we really didn't have another market. We had good herb; we just didn't know anybody with money who wanted as much as we had.

Cliff was a resourceful guy. He'd heard somewhere that the retail price of marijuana on the street was much higher in Canada than in the U.S. So he suggested we take our little operation up north. He was a fugitive, having skipped out on the bond after his tumultuous scene and subsequent arrest outside Customs at the Miami Airport. And our roundabout method for marketing the herb up in Iowa was not really very efficient. So without much deliberation, we decided to take our road show to Toronto, the vast population hub across the Lake from Niagara Falls. None of us knew anyone in Canada, but we didn't know anybody in Miami either. So we made our plans. There were no cell phones in 1972. So whatever coordination we'd need to pull off the aggressive move north had to be outlined and set in place before we started. Then, simply do it and pray for success. For any of it to work, we would need both good fortune and divine intervention. With God's grace, we had faith that we had a sufficient measure of each.

Brother Gary is a Jewish brother from Racine, Wisconsin. He was one of the four white guys who had originally welcomed me to Papine on my initial trip to Jamaica. We devised a plan whereby Gary, Brian and I would load up ourselves at the camp in Trelawny, fly to Miami via Nassau and pick up the car. After loading as much of our stuff from the house as possible into the back of the big 4-door sedan, we planned to head for Windsor, Ontario, where we intended to make rendezvous with Judy, Jennifer, Cordelia, Jackie, Kali and Cliff as they deplaned from their specified flight on the appointed date. All of it would be accomplished on blind faith, of which we had an abundance. We intended to leave Coral Gables behind.

So Gary, Brian and I strapped on our contraband load and left the camp for Montego Bay. Our flight plan would take us through Nassau, Bahamas, and then on to Miami. We'd chosen that route because we knew the U.S. Customs in Nassau was very lax at the time, and once we'd passed through inspection there,

we wouldn't have to do it again when we flew the last leg of our trip into Miami. We tried to take advantage of any tactical insight that might reduce the risk. That was one of them.

One of the brothers drove us to Sangster International. On the way, he stopped at a small roadside shop in Albert Town to get some bun and cheese, a local Jamaican country favorite. When he came back to the brown Australian Ford, the damn thing wouldn't start. It had vapor locked. But we were on a mission. We had to get to the airport. Our timetable demanded it. I managed to talk a local farmer, who was driving a rickety old rattletrap, into giving us a ride. Maybe 30 miles. In those days, \$10 or \$20 in U.S. currency could be very persuasive. Plus, he'd been our guardian angel at that moment. By his good deed, we got to the airport on time, made our flight and sailed through U.S. customs in Nassau, just as we'd hoped to do. Only one small glitch. When we got there, the last flight for the day to Miami had already departed. We'd have to spend the night in Nassau, and we were on a very tight budget. We had no extra dough for a room. As it was, we were hoping to sell a little bit of what we were carrying to a horse groom we knew at Gulfstream Racetrack just to get enough money to make it up to Canada. That's how we rolled. By the seat of our pants.

We bought a few pieces of fruit from some of the local street vendors and walked to the beach. That's where we'd have to spend the night. I remember that I was wearing a sport coat to help conceal the herb I had strapped to my torso. And we were in the tropics. It was very hot and more than a bit uncomfortable. Brian, who was six years old, remembers wearing the parcels through the darkness while we stretched out on the sand for the night. Those packages could pinch the hell out of a mule. Especially for a young kid who wasn't stone-cold nuts like his father and Brother Gary.

We woke early, said our Psalms as the sun rose over the splendor of the tropical beach, ate some fruit and made our way back to the airport for the first flight out to Miami. After we landed, we raised some money from the horse groom at the racetrack in Hallandale, packed up as many of our things as we could fit into the big, gas-guzzling Imperial and hit the Florida Turnpike north. The herb was stashed in the voluminous door panels. We knew we wouldn't be coming back, so we bid Coral Gables farewell. The car would be our home until we found someplace to rent in or around Toronto. We said Psalms and continuously smoked spliffs as we traversed the country from South Florida to Detroit on I-75. We said Psalms all the time, morning, noon and night, And everywhere we went, land, sea or in the air; whether rain or whether shine, we prayed for guidance and offered thanksgiving.

We had a memorable crossing into Canada. We were obviously a sight. A couple of longhairs and a young kid who, for a boy, had some mighty long hair, too. The car was crammed with personal belongings. We had a flimsy story about constructing geodesic domes for affordable housing. And just citing the name R. Buckminster Fuller in association with the domes was enough to merit a wave through Customs. Who wants to mess with Buckminster?

The innocent-looking ensemble of smugglers arrived at the Windsor, Ontario Airport as scheduled. Clifton and a troupe of women and children. That stage of our plan completed, we rented another car and headed for Toronto. All totaled, six adults and three children. We had a really nice payload. Keith would be able to do plenty of good things among the poor Jamaicans with that haul. On the way, we stopped for the night and got a room. For all of us. One room. All the stress, physical exertion and excitement of the day caused Judy to have an asthma attack. She struggled to breathe, and we had no medication. Usually, she carried an inhaler, but she had none that night. I went to the drugstore and managed to get a vaporizer, which somehow helped her through the ordeal. She was tough, brave, self-sacrificing and humble. I never gave her the respect and tenderness she deserved, but she survived to fight another day. Sister Judy. And she loved me still.

After several days in a short-term rental apartment, we were able to find a really nice place outside Collingwood, Ontario, 90 minutes north of Toronto. It was a stately country farmhouse that had been converted into an upscale chalet for the Alpine lifestyle. It was big and completely furnished. Even the dishes and utensils. We moved right in. Both families had plenty of private space to live, and there were additional guest rooms for the others. More than acceptable. It was completely surrounded by a spectacular apple and cherry orchard. The trees were just starting to bloom when we took possession. The fragrant aroma of fruit blossoms filled the air. It was also completely private. We had to market the herb from scratch. Cold-call canvassing. Profile complete strangers by how they looked or what we may have thought, and then asking them if they wanted marijuana. Faith or absolute madness? Perhaps a little of each. Using the refurbished mansion as our base, we imported a bunch of ganja through Windsor. Several sisters and brothers got arrested at Canadian Customs over the summer doing just that. Bighead Stevie, Eileen, Bobby and Brad, to mention a few. I remember visiting Eileen in some tiny jailhouse near Windsor after she'd gotten knocked off. There were casualties, but we continued undaunted with only a minimal trace of anxiety. Nothing we couldn't subdue with Psalms.

It was at Collingwood where sister Cordelia first came amongst us. She was Sarah's high school friend. She was timid and reticent and very young. A doctor's daughter from Iowa City. Later, Cordelia

became Sister Louv, Tommy's wife and confidante. We had a pretty good market in Toronto by then, enough so that Tommy was able to set up another chalet in St. Adele, Quebec to better serve the few customers we'd established in Montreal. Summer rental chalets like that were plentiful. The owners only used them during ski season.

Somewhere along here I should clarify my cavalier usage of the term "mule". The brothers and sisters who had audaciously stormed the various Customs stations throughout North America were not actually "mules" in the common everyday vernacular sense of the word. By definition, "mules" get paid for their services. None of our crew ever received a dime, personally, for their courageous sacrifices. It was total commitment and damn the torpedoes! Altruistic to the extreme. We made those moves until a chill filled the air. We knew the end of that Canadian episode was near. The MoBay-to-Windsor route was getting mucked up from the recent busts, making it evermore difficult to continue with the same *modus operandi*. And besides all that, Judy and Jackie were both pregnant. Imagine that!

Later, when I got back down to Jamaica, I told Keith the good news. Judy was with child. But he wasn't so happy. He gave me a less than tacit admonition when he told me that I had sidelined one of our main couriers. He didn't use that word, but that was definitely the message. At the time, it actually seemed like a very thoughtless infraction on my part. How inconsiderate of me! But I simply could never regret my animal instincts. A good roll in the hay is almost impossible to find unacceptable. I actually quite enjoyed it. Very much, indeed, in spite of any possible recriminations.

8 Apple in Windsor - Riviera Beach

That summer, 1972, we bombarded Windsor Customs with a barrage of sisters and brothers bringing in small amounts of ganja strapped to our bodies. I especially remember one of those moves. It was September 2, the date of the first big game of an international series of hockey games. What made it so notable was the fact that the matchup was between a selected all-star team of players from the former U.S.S.R. versus an equally star-studded squad of Canadians. Plus a few fortunate Americans tossed in on the Canadian side to intensify the drama. It was the first time professional National Hockey League players had been allowed to participate. It was a headline news story of the time. The Summit Super Series. That's what it was called.

Brother Allen, a Jewish brother from Detroit nicknamed "Apple" by his peers (that was us), and I happened to be on a flight arriving in Windsor Customs at precisely the same time that the first game between the Cold War adversaries got underway. Phil Esposito, the Boston Bruins biggest celebrity, was playing center for the Canadian team. It was a big deal. Apple and I were both loaded to the gills with sweet-smelling incense. The ganja. As we were deplaning right into the inspection area at Customs, a spontaneous uproar broke out. After a moment of uneasiness, we were both relieved when we realized that Phil had just scored the first goal of the game, giving the Canadian team a 1-0 lead. We cheered with rapturous relief, along with the rest of the fans. Thank God! Even Apple, who's not a guy prone to smiling very much, broke into a big, toothy old grin like a Cheshire Cat. We were walking on air as we swept through Customs without a glitch, sphincters relaxed, the parcels reassuringly pinching our sides.

Somebody picked us up, and we exuberantly replayed the scene at Customs for our spiritual contemporaries as we drove to the safe haven in the midst of the fruit trees. We said a few Psalms and fired up several pipeloads of the sacramental herb after we arrived home safely. Our onslaught of the Windsor Customs station continued on through the summer until we determined it would be best if we found another smuggling route. The heat was on because of several arrests, and the seasons were changing. Autumn would soon turn into winter, and Canada was a very cold place in the winter. We had all grown accustomed to the weather in Florida and Jamaica. Time to bail on the Canuck adventure.

We resumed our airport tactics back in the U.S. where we felt the heat had subsided, whether it had or not. The incident I'll recall now happened on October 23, 1972. How do I remember that? Coincidentally, just as I was encountering a minor skirmish with authorities in South Florida, my long-suffering love, Judith

Kay, was giving birth to our third child, a boy, Daniel James Tranmer, at the Maxfield Medical Center in Kingston, Jamaica. The facility borders on Trenchtown, Bob Marley's old stomping ground. Straight-ass slums. As Judy was giving birth in the pits of hell, Brothers Tommy, Gary, Bobby and I were rolling south on I-95 in a rental car. We were taking some money down to Miami. It wasn't much. \$12,000. But it was all we had, so it seemed like a fortune. The cash was wrapped in two separate parcels of C-notes, which I had concealed on the bottoms of my feet, beneath a pair of socks. Uncomfortable? Yes, but that cunning ploy seemed like sophisticated stuff back in '72. We stopped at the Riviera Beach exit to get gas, a cup of coffee and something to eat. As we drove into the restaurant's parking lot, the red and blue lights flashed in the rearview mirror. The cops were on us. Not because of any infraction, but with four of us in one car, it was way too much hair in a single location. It had to be trouble. The police ran our IDs and then let us go. No problem. We went into the restaurant to eat. When we finished, it was back to the car to move on. But the blue-light special on Aisle 4 was twinkling again behind us. "Not so fast, boys." The tone of his voice said it all. It turned out that one of us - me - had an outstanding warrant from New York. Of course. The bond I'd skipped out on back in January. Bumbacлот! Well, that meant off to jail for me.

At the time, the brothers, me included, were extreme radicals and somewhat fearless. There was more than a slight touch of madness mixed in, too. And those times were very much different than now. Considerably less violent. A lot of the rebels back then were peaceniks. The long hair was offensive, but we were no threat to anyone, save the marijuana prohibitionists. Somehow, the brothers got inside the police station as the cops were booking me. That could never happen now, but there they were making sure the cops got a full dose of the brothers' relentless "sins-of-the-flesh" denunciations. The unfamiliar language and the brothers' naturally outrageous demeanor must have been enough to momentarily distract them. I managed to get the packets of cash, along with my socks, and pass them off to Bobby, who slipped them into his pocket with the same nonchalance that defined his disposition. If Bobby was sweating about anything, he never let on. He had the money secured as the brothers finally had to leave the station. I marched off to the cellblock with a jailer, but I was 12 grand lighter.

It was late Friday, so I was going to have to wait until Monday before I'd be able to see a judge for my arraignment. The brothers headed to Miami, cash in hand. I spent the weekend in Palm Beach County Jail, but come Monday morning, the deputies came to my cell and took me up front. Then, they gave back my property and released me. No charges. Whoa! What the hell had happened? Apparently, Tommy had gotten busy on the phone after he arrived down to Miami. Posing as my lawyer, he zeroed in on the bureaucrat in New York City who would hold my fate in his hands. Tommy found out that I would have to be extradited back to "The City of Dreams" as soon as they were able to arrange for a team to come and get

me. And then the transportation costs on top of that. Two armed New York police officers would have to fly down to Palm Beach, pick me up and then return to New York. Permits to fly with firearms, hotel rooms, per diem and whatever other expenses may be incurred along the way. "And for what?" Tommy reasoned, almost sympathetically. A few pounds of marijuana? Then he added that the "Empire City" could just keep the \$1,000 cash bond that had been posted for me. Tommy probably could have made a pretty decent lawyer had he chosen that profession. He was full of hot air. The official saw the wisdom of his argument, even though the bond had already been forfeited. And Tommy got them to scrap the fugitive warrant. All charges dropped. "Get outta here, boy! And don't come back!" "Sure, boss," I answered gratefully.

Tommy had played the Get-Out-of-Jail-Free card, and it had worked. Later, sitting around in the little house we owned on S.W. 12th Street, we each recounted our roles in the drama. As we passed around numerous pipeloads of chopped up ganja mixed with Craven "A" cigarette tobacco, we said a few Psalms and chanted our praises. "Jerusalem on high, my song and city is."

9 N.Y.C. - Judy, Brian, Bighead Stevie

I didn't see our son, Daniel, until months later, after quite a few more memorable adventures. Judy and the kids (now three in number) stayed in Kingston with Keith, Phyllis and their kids at Sirgany Drive, which was a family dwelling down at the bottom of Mountain View Avenue. Jackie and her young daughter, Kali, stayed there too. Cliff and I were in and out. At that time in our fledgling movement, the new block house on Sirgany Drive was where visitors came to discuss the expanding church businesses in Jamaica. It was our unofficial embassy, a poor man's embassy. We were moving ganja out of Trelawny to various destinations. Tony Burns, "Big Bob" Eckert, Susan, Cordelia, Cliff, Jackie, Tommy, Allen, Bobby, Sarah, Gary, Eileen, Jake, Woody, Brad, Chuck, Irene, Anna, Judy, me and Brian. There were more of those spiritually-focused kamikazes, but the list gives some perspective. There were quite a few of us. We moved as much as our limited capabilities allowed us to do over the next several months.

Then I got knocked off again in New York. Kennedy Airport. That second mishap in Gotham City began with me taking off from Jamaica on an early flight. When I arrived at Customs in New York, they randomly opened my fake box of cigars and found the chunk of herb secreted inside. Then, they searched me and found the packages I had strapped to my body. It was quickly off to jail for me.

On the next flight from MoBay to Kennedy, Judy, Brian and "Bighead" Stevie were all packed up and rolling. Bighead had earned his nickname by sporting a massive sandy-colored Afro that would have made Jimi Hendrix proud. But Stevie was a Jewish Caucasian brother from Longmeadow, Massachusetts. Judy had a fake belly, which was really a pillow of ganja to make her look pregnant, and some women's cosmetics stuffed with more ganja. Brian had the body armor packages and a jigsaw puzzle. Bighead had the body armor too, and a box of cigars jammed with the green, leafy substance. Their carry-on packages had the same "bogus" receipts from a duty-free shop at Sangster International that my earlier fake box of cigars had had. There was no bluffing anymore. Caught red-handed. Boom! They were all busted. Brian was taken to a foster home, where the foster family treated him very well. Kind, generous people. Judy was taken off to Rikers Island, a real horror show, and Stevie came over to the jail where I was hanging out. I was verbally harassing the jailers with an illuminating tirade against debauchery. Stevie joined in, and together we were insufferable. But Rikers Island had been a real shock for the shy, Midwest, Baptist-raised white girl named Judy. She told me some of the unspeakable spectacles she had to witness throughout her ordeal. One of the stories, and she recounted it to me several times over the years, was seeing a worm fall

out of one of the black street girls while all of the new arrivals were being strip-searched. Life can be rough on people. Who can figure it out?

We always felt, and often said, that God works in mysterious ways. It had been one of those moments, because a pro bono lawyer came out of nowhere to represent us. Right off, he got 7-year-old Brian out of the juvenile center and took him to his own home in the Bronx, where his wife and young son welcomed the dark-haired youth. Then, the attorney got Judy and me out of jail, within mere hours of our arrest, and he took us to his home, too. We happily reunited with Brian. The lawyer couldn't get Bighead out until the following Monday because of some legal stumbling block. So, our travel companion and friend had to spend the weekend in the hoosegow. The lawyer, whose name I have shamefully forgotten, and his gracious wife made us a much-appreciated chicken dinner with all the fixings. He really helped us. Our conversation over dinner was heartfelt. Anyone who encountered any of us during that period knew one thing for sure: we were as serious and dedicated as anybody could be. Before we left, our attorney gave Brian a small winter coat. In January, it's cold in New York City, and we were dressed for the tropics. Perry Mason was a good man, and he had a family that would make any man proud.

The next morning, we got a flight to Jamaica. Stevie soon followed once he got loose. Just another day at the office. Our release had something to do with the Rockefeller Law. Though it was considered draconian by most of the people in the legal community, it had a provision whereby first-time drug offenders could be released without consequence if they promised never to come back to New York State again. See ya! What a break. I knew it was God moving in those mysterious ways again. I had made that move using a fake ID. They never connected me with the guy who'd been busted the previous January doing the same exact thing. That had been James Edward Tranmer. And this guy was Thomas Patrick Boyle.

At the end of March, 1973, I got popped again. Miami Customs. I had almost 10 pounds of sweet bud strapped to my body and a birthday cake. The cake was really a rounded block of ganja covered with a coating of chocolate frosting. That clever ruse had been Cliff's idea. He had always been an intuitive old bootlegger, which wasn't a bad talent to have, especially if you're trying to smuggle some premium smoke into the country. Once, he went through customs in Miami wearing a short-haired wig. He was decked out in a rented, Roman Catholic priest disguise. Black suit, starched collar, shiny shoes. His devout Catholic mother would have been very proud of her son had she known about his temporary ordination. Father Middleton. He may have gone twice as an undercover clergy member. I know I made it through once with the chocolate-covered morsel of weed, but the second time my cake lost its flavor. The frosting had gotten stuck to the top of the box when the agent opened it, thus exposing my green birthday cake.

They never actually deported any of the white folks from Jamaica. Instead, they would simply escort us to one of the airports and make sure we got on the correct return flight back to the U.S. Altogether, I got kicked off the island three times. Deported without cause. Once from Trelawny through Falmouth and MoBay; once from the Halfway Tree jail after a raid at Stillwell Road; and finally, when they'd put me in Central Lockup in Kingston overnight, and then drove me to Norman Manley Airport. No muss, no fuss. They'd also confiscated the passport I had in my real name. They took it from Judy's purse during a raid at Sirgany Drive. Fortunately, I wasn't there at the time. I never saw the passport again. And, as a last deathknell of sorts, they made me persona non grata on the island. But it hadn't mattered much since I'd already switched my ID. After my arrest, they transported me to the Dade County Jail in downtown Miami. God bless America!

10 Eglin

That time there was no bail. I'd had two previous bond-jumping incidents, and that wasn't counting the Rockefeller Law encounter under an assumed name in New York. Sometime during my month, or so, stay in Dade County, authorities discovered I was actually James Tranmer and not Thomas Boyle. Through fingerprints. In those days, they didn't have the technological advances that are taken for granted now. Computers were a new science and very limited compared with today. No cell phones, no sophisticated central database. Whatever method they were using back then took a couple of weeks to make the match and the identification. Now, they know your mother's maiden name in just seconds ... and your shoe size, too. I plead guilty because I'd been caught with the goods, and they always threatened a poor nincompoop like me with a huge prison sentence if one should dare take the case to trial. The judge sentenced me to a year-and-a-day in Federal prison, starting from the day they'd arrested me at the airport. She said that she had to teach me a lesson. I was a multiple offender. I had a disregard for the law. And (she must have thought) you're a damn nuisance! Though she left that part unsaid. I'm still, after all these years, unable to learn my lesson. I like the ganja and where it takes me. What can I say? The sentence translated into 8 months and 29 days, all totaled. I already had about a month in the Dade County jail. So ... cool.

Two U.S. Marshals picked me up from the jail and we drove north, me shackled hand and foot in the back seat of their car (that's S.O.P in the B.O.P. - Standard Operating Procedure in the Bureau Of Prisons). After the first day driving north, they stopped at the Federal Prison in Tallahassee and dropped me off for the night. Tallahassee was a men's prison at that time. They picked me up the next morning and we proceeded on to Eglin Air Force Base where the Feds had a minimum-security prison camp. Not even a fence around the place. During the 2-day trip from Miami to Eglin, there were many discussions between myself and my two guardians. Mostly it was me endlessly jabbering about the virtues of ganja, the Mosaic-Law tenants of our doctrine and the Red-White-and-Blue's (interpret that America and England) role in the long history of slavery and oppression of the displaced African people. And I continually tossed our understanding of the significance of long hair and a long beard in relation to man's spirituality into the dialog. I wore them out. By the time we finally got to the prison camp, the Marshals had decided to alter their usual protocol. Instead of just dropping me off and proceeding on with their duties, they decided to stay for a couple hours extra just to watch me get admitted to the B.O.P. Back then, S.O.P. dictated that all new arrivals had to have their hair cut to military length. Those guys giggled with orgasmic delight as they watched the hacks whack off my glorious mane. I aim to please. For real though, it felt like we had made a bond of some sort after only two days of interaction. Those guys getting such enjoyment from what should

have been humiliating to me was like getting pleasure from watching your annoying little brother trip, face first, on top of a fresh cow pie. Personally, I had nothing against those guys. We were simply on opposite sides in the epic war against weed. A war against creation. Hence, a war against the Creator.

The prison was surreal. The inmate housing was obsolete, wooden military barracks. Old, dormitory style. Rows of single bunks. A chow hall, a chapel, the recreation yard and a small Medical Center made up the rest of the camp. The boundary was an imaginary line in the middle of a dirt road that circled the compound. Are you kidding me? My thoughts were immediately and instinctively on how I could get the hell out of there and head for Jamaica, where Judy and the kids were still living at Sirgany Drive. I actually felt like Babylon, that cruel old brute, had very limited time remaining of their reign on earth. So leaving a tumultuous trail behind me really meant nothing. In fact, it was the thing to do. I even thought about purloining a bicycle from one of the military dependents who were housed nearby and pedaling my delusional ass all the way to Miami. A bit extreme, but it crossed my mind more than once.

After I was able to exchange a few letters with Judy, and arrange with my counselor and caseworker for a 24-hour "conjugal visit" pass, we hatched a plan. The pass was designed so that inmates with less than 6 months remaining on their sentences could spend a day with the wife or fiancée in the community. It was a motivational tool. Dinner and a movie in Niceville, the closest town, followed by a night in one of the seedy local motels going at it for as long as a horny 30-year-old man could last with the lovely Judith Kay. I could only imagine. Back to reality! What actually happened was that Judy, accompanied by Brad and Don, drove all the way up from Miami, squeezed between the brothers on the bench seat of a Ford Ranchero. It had a camper shell covering the pickup bed. They parked in front of the administration building, and Judy came in to sign me out for the day. She brought me a change of civilian clothes for the outing. Orange polyester slacks were fashionable back then, and I thought I looked pretty stylish as I walked out into the sunlight. Judy slid onto the front seat and I crawled into the bed of the utility coupe. There was a thin mat to lay on for my comfort as we headed for Miami. Through the small sliding glass window between the cab and the pickup bed, we greeted each other. "Louv", we hissed through the opening. But Duppy was only interested in one thing, and it wasn't love. "Did you fuck your fist?" he demanded to know. Fist-fucking was the terminology we used to describe masturbation, one of the worst possible transgressions. "No", I lied. We had a long way to go, and a short time to get there. Southbound and down.

We got to Miami late, but Judy and I were still able to make the last flight out to Kingston. We got to Sirgany Drive long after dark. I was skin-faced. That was a derogatory term we used to describe the clean-shaven Sodomites. God forbid! But there I was with no whiskers at all. The next morning after prayer,

I was off to the country. I was a federal fugitive and thus needed to hide out. Judy and the kids stayed in town. What we called the country was Crown Land, Trelawny Parish. God's country, high above everything else as far as the eye could see. Serenity in a sense. Clouds hovering around the peaks in the morning light, and us above the clouds. It was better than prison, but I really didn't feel free. Leaving prison like that with only four months remaining on my sentence (and I had been living in what was referred to by other inmates as a "Country Club" prison) was one of the stupidest things I have ever done. I have to say, I've done quite a few ill-advised capers in my life, but the escape from Federal prison is up there at the top of the list. It's a charge that has always followed me throughout my career on the wrong side of the law. Escape. Initially, the U.S. Marshals dogged me. And then in 1975, the FBI took over all fugitive warrants for Uncle Sam. That fugitive status went on for more than seven years, until they finally nailed me at the Tampa International Airport in 1980 after a wild chase scene. F.D.L.E. Agent Manny Funes, our chief law-enforcement adversary at the time, was the one who got me. Bravo Manny. But I was unshaken. My perception of accepted values (reality) was obfuscated by zeal and an unrealistic view of some very basic ideals. I felt like I was on a sacred mission for God. Absolutely convinced of it. A holy crusade.

11 Trelawny

I'd been locked up for almost five months before I was able to make my escape. While I was in stir, Judy had made two more ventures into the wilderness of Babylon. Two more ganja moves. And it was actually New York, but in our minds and in our rhetoric, America and England represented the modern-day manifestation of the storied cockatrice. That's how we rolled.

At the time, Judy had been breastfeeding Daniel, who was still an infant. The first move she made, Brian was with her. He remembers trying to keep up with his mother. He wasn't yet 8 years old. Besides the herb he had corseted to his small body, he was carrying a teddy bear crammed with aromatic buds. He'd had to drag the stuffed animal because the teddy bear was too heavy for his youthful strength to manage easily, while his body armaments unforgivingly pinched his sides. The teddy bear was only a few pounds, but he was a child. They made it through safely and quickly were able to return to Jamaica in a timely manner, so the breastfeeding was only momentarily interrupted. No problem. The next move hadn't been quite so smooth. Judy had gone with Jackie and Cliff through New York. Brian had stayed in Jamaica that time, but the trip had some delays, and she didn't get back to Sirgany Drive in the time she'd allotted herself. Her breast milk had dried up, and there were no restarts. We considered things like that to be a small sacrifice along the way toward achieving our goal. Which was to bring down Babylon. Judy and I, and ultimately our family, performed many perilous deeds and made numerous miscalculations while doing them. But we truly believed we were connected to the Divine, and that we were following the right and judicious path.

After my escape from prison, I went to the country. Trelawny. Aesthetically, the mountaintop refuge was like paradise, with a surreal view of the world, often from high above the cloud levels of an early morning. Cockpit Country. Our diet consisted of only the freshest organic fruits and vegetables imaginable. Fresh poultry, fresh eggs, fresh goat on occasion, and fresh beef every Friday from the weekly cow-kill in the sparsely populated mountaintop neighborhood. Otherwise, our lives were extremely austere. But it wasn't the living conditions that made the unpretentious habitat so confining for me. I was wanted in the U.S. by the Feds. I had no valid ID, real or fake. My 3-week tourist visa had long since expired. Judy and the kids were in town, and I was entrenched in the wilderness. My testosterone levels were off the chart, if there is such a chart. I hadn't even had a chance to sample my delicious young wife's exquisite feminine mystique after I'd gotten out of jail. Bummer! Who in their right mind would do such a thing? Unbelievable!

I could have pole-vaulted to Christiana, a nearby town. Low-class and vulgar? Yes, but also true. God's humanity connects Him to us. I hope that's true. God incarnate, man Divine.

At the end of Crown Land Road, above the tiny town of Troy, my existence soon assimilated to the poor, country ways of life. It was a new experience. At that time in the progression, the isolated encampment was like a basic training camp for the expanding goals of the white people. Discipline, regimented prayer schedules, sleep deprivation, sexual repression. It all seemed like a small sacrifice for the privilege of connecting with the elusive Spirit from which we had supped. Every one of us Americans who spent time up there felt it. But the Psalms themselves have the capacity to lift one up or to stomp one into the ground. So we all hopped on the rollercoaster ride ... the Psalms Tree (Psaltery). From the time I'd first partaken in the daily prayer services at Papine, which was the oblation I keep talking about, we had always made that intercession twice a day. Early morning and then again in the evening. When Wally came up to the mountaintop, he initiated a third oblation, and conspicuously lengthened the other services. One at 4am, one at 3pm and the culmination at 8pm. Four, three and eight. That became our battle cry. A mantra. Amid the clouds of ganja smoke, our prayers arose. We, the brothers and sisters, were the altars, and the ganja was our sweet-smelling incense arising from those holy altars. The herb seemed to elevate our consciousness and make our offering more acceptable. We felt that we were guided by the wisdom of the ancients and the unfolding understanding of the parables.

After a small burst of prosperity, Keith had a couple of frame houses built in close proximity to rough-hewn Church structure at the very top of the mountain. One was for Brother Wally, who had just recently come amongst us, though I had never seen him in Papine or in Ivy's presence. He was immediately perceived to be a spiritual elder of the flock, especially by the white folks. The other little lodging was for the sisters. We strictly adhered to Levitical Law regarding uncleanness and separation. So, the sisters needed someplace to hide when they were menstruating. The houses were new, but there was no electricity nor indoor plumbing. We used outhouses and kerosene lamps. Bathe in a tub of water or walk to the stream, about a mile away. Later, after another infusion of cash from America, there was a Delco generator to supply a little light. Water was toted by the bucket-full up the hill from a concrete catchment or from the nearby stream. Rainwater was collected in 55-gallon drums from the runoff of the buildings' zinc roofs. Old style. We started at the bottom. Poor-ass country living and poor-ass parishioners, black and white.

Brothers and sisters continued with the work in the U.S., which was to move as much herb as possible into our native country and exchange it for cash. The airport smuggling waned to nothing as the naval contingent of our operation blossomed under the Rush brothers' wit, skill and determination. There should

be no confusion about this fact: without those guys (Brad and Don Rush), the eventual Coptic success and prosperity would never have reached the pinnacles we finally attained had the gruff siblings chosen another profession. The boat moves were the foundation of all our accomplishments. We progressed steadily and confidently. Who could be against us when God was for us?

Although we were a small operation in a vast network of worldwide marijuana smugglers, we prospered nicely. During that time period, I stayed in Trelawny for almost a year. While I languished in the unrelenting terrain, I was chomping at the bit to get involved somehow in the ganja business again. Before the herb could be loaded onto the boat for shipment, it had to be pressed into blocks and securely wrapped. At first, that responsibility fell on the shoulders of a very skillful, local bushman whom Keith had converted from a Dreadlock Rasta to a Comb-out Rasta. Dreadlocks, which we disparagingly referred to as “rope heads”, were our theological nemesis. They deified Haile Selassie, and we abhorred the “cowardly Lion of the Tribe of Judah”, even though we didn’t know him from Tina Turner. So it was. The former dreadlock was Niah Edward. He was a tough guy. In the uninhabited mountainous jungle, the nimble warrior carried heavy croaker sacks full of loose marijuana, on his head, to secret locations in the crags of Crown Land, where he pressed the product into serviceable blocks and wrapped them for transport. He had a very efficient steel press, which Brad and Keith had designed and later had it welded together in Spanish Town. It was a necessary tool of the trade.

After a period of convalescence due to some nasty sores on my right leg and foot, I started following Eddie into the bush. The lesions on my legs had been bacterial infections caused by tropical microorganisms. Old-fashioned jungle rot. We treated those sores with only the most primitive herbal medicines. After I healed, Niah Edward taught me a few of the tricks of his trade, and how to negotiate the wild. I soon took over that aspect of our operation. Having something to do besides the unenthusiastic drudgery of four, three and eight invigorated me. I went out there every day, often by myself, often with Brian as my protege and helper. Sometimes one of the other brothers would come out to help or bring me a bowl of food. Brother Howard brought me supper one night. It was after the sun had long since set. He got lost in the thick tropical wilderness on a moonless night. That caused a big fuss. They finally found him by following the sound of old Howie chanting one of the hymns in the darkness of the jungle, completely off-key and completely off-track. Howard was a trip. I pressed the herb for three or four movements. I tried to install a quality control system where I rated the product before packaging it, and I made up a list designating the quality and origin of each block. The white brothers in America appreciated it, but it went over like a fart in a phone booth with Keith (that’s an obsolete reference, no phone booths anymore) when

he learned of my grading ploy. The list was tagged as “informer business” by Keith and ceased to exist right there. So much for quality control. There was none, nor would there ever be.

Keith managed to acquire two very nice places in Manchester Parish. One was a spacious, upscale residence in Mandeville. It was a nice alternative for Judy and the kids to stay, rather than the cramped quarters in Trelawny or at Sirgany Drive. The other place he got was a sprawling seaside estate east of Alligator Pond on the south coast of the plush tropical island. Keith had purchased the places from an Arab businessman named Kareem, the same guy we’d purchased the used car with the bald tire from on my first trip to Jamaica. The socialist regime under Prime Minister Michael Manley and his cronies was enacting laws that had the capitalists terrified for themselves, their families and whatever fortunes they may have amassed. Kareem, like a lot of his contemporaries, was happy to forfeit the properties to Keith in exchange for cash in America. The People's National Party had made it almost impossible for anyone to leave Jamaica with anything of real value. So, those transactions had been advantageous for all parties. Nice properties in Jamaica at fire-sale prices for the Coptics, and good old American cash, or a deposit of any amount at the financial institution of their choice in the U.S. for those fleeing the potential communist rule of the PNP. Communism nationalizes capitalists’ property. Gimme that!

As time passed, the Church grew exponentially.

12 Trelawny Raid, Brother Woody

Each move increased in size. More money and much more activity among the masses of poor people, especially the downtrodden. It was a cosmic shift. And it caused Jamaican authorities to become more suspicious. The idea of affluent young white people from America commingling with the poor black locals was troubling for the politicians to swallow. Then, mix in the Rasta movement, which the ruling class disdained, and the contemptible ganja weed, which the religious group seemed to be smoking in massive amounts, all resulting in a potentially volatile situation. Nuclear, actually. Something had to be done. So they raided our remote compound in Trelawny from the land and the air, simultaneously. Our encampment was more than a mile into the hills - first down a steep grade and then up again - away from the primitive, winding, unpaved country road that ascended the mountainside to its summit. Crown Land Road. The JDF (Jamaica Defense Force) had received several surplus helicopters from the officious United States military complex, so they devised their insidious plan. It took a while to negotiate the path to the camp, so the helicopters swooped in first and dropped several gun toting soldiers and police into our outpost, while the ground forces stumbled along toward us over the trail. Some people got away, but the uniformed invaders rounded up what remained of us. The cops and soldiers were crude and extremely loutish in their behavior, especially toward the Jamaican brothers and sisters. The leader of their raid, a black Jamaican policewoman, was especially vile. She used the most disparaging terminologies and racial slurs imaginable when dealing with her own people. The cops actually beat up several locals, including hitting Brother Wally and punching Samson (Brother Dougie) in the mouth. They did not touch any of the white people. Any incident between the Jamaican authorities and American tourists would reflect poorly on the economy. Tourism, at that time, was the #1 boost for the island's ever-flagging financial system. Do not rock the boat! That, of course, was before the colossal ganja boom.

The end result was that, after so much trauma and malevolent behavior by government forces, they finally just rounded up all the Americans they could find and loaded them onto an infamous prison bus aptly named "The Black Mariah". They drove us to Falmouth, where we, including women and children, spent the night in jail. We still had our oblation the next morning before they bussed us all to the Sangster International Airport in MoBay, where we caught a flight to Miami. Stinkin' Rastas! Go home!

There were dozens of white brothers and sisters who made moves through the airports as committed, unpaid mules, but there was only one African-American brother who strapped on the green gold and faithfully went into battle. He was the sole American black guy in a dedicated core of Church members

who strictly adhered to the tenets of the doctrine and, as much as is earthly possible, the Mosaic Laws. “Woody” made a few trips through airports and had a few memorable experiences of his own. But there was one I’ll always remember. He came through Miami. Early '73, I think. He got dinged at Customs. He was languishing in a holding cell in the Dade County courthouse on West Flagler waiting to be arraigned before a judge for trying to smuggle a few pounds of good weed through the Customs checkpoint. He needed a fresh change of clothes to look presentable before the bench, so I had gotten him some clothes and was about to deliver them to the holding area. I could actually see Woody in the cell awaiting his turn on the docket when I dropped off the clothes. I had come downtown with Brian, who was seven years old at the time, Brother Jeffrey, who couldn't have been more than 18, or so, Brother Timmy, who was acting as chauffeur for the group, and a tiny little girl who was wearing a head tie to cover her thick, flowing locks of lustrous hair. Brian and Timmy went shopping to get a few of the much-needed items for Jamaica. Jeff accompanied Jennifer, my soon to be 5-year-old daughter, and myself into the courthouse.

Fred Drazen was a U.S. Customs officer in Miami at the time. He was one of the agents who made the final check of the passengers entering the U.S. He was the agent who'd busted Woody coming through his station, and, by chance, he was also the one who had busted me a few weeks earlier trying the same damn thing. He knew I had skipped out on bail. Unbeknownst to me, Mr. Fred was there in the courtroom as the arresting officer for Woody's arraignment. Drazen spotted me. He knew there was a warrant out for my arrest. He expeditiously came up to me, identified himself (I already knew who he was), and asked for my ID. I had some fake credentials, which he knew were suspect at best. Having Jennifer by my side and a valid driver license in a fake name gave him pause, but he knew his instincts were true. I just kept talking. "You've made a mistake, sir," I insisted. By chance, or Divine intervention, Woody's case was called up on the courtroom docket just then. Officer Drazen's presence was required before the judge to formally identify Woody. So he quickly turned me over to a uniformed officer who had been listening attentively to our dialog. He told the cop to hold me until he returned. As soon as Drazen went back into the courtroom, I started in on the officer detaining me with my seemingly feasible story. "Officer Drazen is mistaken. I am really who my ID says I am, and Jennifer is my daughter." She even called me "Papa" in her innocent, little-girl voice, to further validate my claim. "Mistaken identity," I insisted. Again, a situation presented itself. I must have befuddled the circumstances enough that the police officer assigned by Drazen to hold me decided to let me go. Miracles, miracles! They do happen.

I didn't wait. I hauled ass down the hallway toward the elevator with Jennifer in tow. Drazen caught a glimpse of me as I passed by the small triangular window in the swinging door to the courtroom. All hell broke loose. Drazen came flying out the door as I was getting on the elevator at the far end of the hallway.

Pandemonium broke out. "Stop him! Stop that man!" But it was too late. The elevator doors closed, and down we went. We hit the ground floor, and Jenny and I walked as quickly as we could, without drawing attention to ourselves, out the big entrance doors, across the street, and into a retail carpet store. I watched the bewildered posse of security cops through a narrow gap between the huge rolls of carpet as they came rushing out of the courthouse and realized that the long-haired son of a bitch had disappeared. As fate would have it, we got away clean. We waited patiently until it quieted down and then set out to find Brian and Timmy, so we could go home. I can't remember what happened to Jeff or how Woody's court appearance was finally resolved, but I did speak with Woody on the phone after Judy passed away in 2021. We hadn't seen each other or spoken for more than 40 years, but he told me that our adventure, way back when, was a day he would never forget. And I haven't forgotten it either. Au revoir, faithful brother.

It was always adventures like that one which reinforced our faith in the protection of the Living God. It really wasn't arrogance. At least, I never sensed that. We were sincere and humble in the assurance that we were on a Divine mission to right a multitude of wrongs.

13 Central Lockup, Mandeville

When Drazen busted me coming through Miami Customs, I was using the name Thomas Boyle. Tom was born a day after I was at Mercy Hospital in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. His mother, Anne, and my mother, Margaret, shared the same room at Mercy in January, 1944. Anne and her husband, Lefty, became my godparents, and our families had a lifelong friendship. I knew Anne's maiden name, Turner, so it was relatively easy for me to get Tom's birth certificate and start a new set of ID with it. At the time, getting a valid new ID was a real coup for me in my fledgling new profession. Even though I'd had about 10 pounds of fragrant herb strapped to my body, the judge had released me on O.R. That's an "Own Recognizance" bond reserved for less grievous offenders, like me. After that little inconvenience, I simply took the next flight back to Jamaica, immediately violating the provisions of my bond. That decision hadn't really been a decision. I had only one thing on my mind, and all else wasn't really even considered. But when I arrived at the airport in Kingston, the Jamaican Customs agents recognized me. They didn't know me by name, but they knew I was one of the white people associated with that anomalous group of Rastas operating somewhere on the lush island's interior. Yeah, he's one of those kooks.

None of the other Jamaican orders of Rasta had white associates, at least not like ours. On that pretense alone, they would not stamp my visa. Instead, they took me to jail. Central Lockup in Kingston, Jamaica. Now that's a jail! When I arrived, I was placed in a dreary looking cell with seven other detainees, mostly destitute Jamaicans. All black guys, all dirt poor. There were two concrete benches along opposing walls. That was the extent of the furniture. No toilet, no water, none of the essentials. A #10 can sat in the middle of the room for #1 and #2. Yep! One can, no privacy, no tissue, no shit. Get used to it. And that's how we slept that night, sitting up, leaning against the unforgiving concrete wall. An experience like that will break down the average fanatic. Not me, though. I was a glutton for punishment.

Fortunately for me, the next morning they escorted me back to the airport in handcuffs and unlocked them only after I'd safely boarded the flight for Miami. That was where my return ticket was slated to go. The Jamaican authorities were glad to get rid of the long-haired lunatic, who was technically a tourist. Send the jabbering fool back to America from whence he'd come. And that would have been fine, had it been the only problem. When I arrived at Customs in Miami, there was an immediate hullabaloo. They'd recognized me as the guy who had been arrested just a few short weeks earlier. I had obviously skipped out on my bail

agreement because I was entering the U.S. from another country. They arrested me again and carted me off to the Dade County Jail. It was a serious disappointment.

Mandeville is one of the most affluent urban areas in Jamaica. There are no slums in Mandeville. Brother Keith arranged for the purchase of 2 very nice properties in Manchester Parish's south-central island location. One was a beautiful, lavish home with all the amenities in a desirable neighborhood of the unspoiled city. The other was a sprawling property situated on the coast, directly south of Mandeville and just a few miles east of Alligator Pond. Keith got both places from a disillusioned Arab businessman named Karam. By 1974 the Coptic Church was prospering enough to easily absorb the cost of both places.

The People's National Party (PNP) had come into power in the 1972 election. It was a political struggle between capitalism and socialism. The socialists had triumphed, and Michael Manley, the Prime Minister, began nationalizing many of the country's businesses and resources. It had caused serious concern among the island's capitalist community. Many of them wanted out, but severe monetary restrictions had made it difficult, or even impossible, to secure their assets elsewhere. Keith was their guy. He was able to provide a solution to their dilemma. He could put the money, in U.S. dollars and cents, into their hands abroad, thus circumventing the prohibitive government strategy to regulate all currency leaving the island. Karam had been delighted at the opportunity to recoup the value of his holdings in the U.S. and start a new life in Canada. The sale had been extremely beneficial to both buyer and seller. The place at Alligator Pond would become our private beach location for loading up and exporting the herb to the U.S. For several years, many, many tons of ganja found its way to the ganja lovers in America from that inconspicuous seaside haven.

One day, the cops raided the compound in Mandeville. They were looking for white people who had overstayed their tourist visas. That was a transparent ruse. Of course, they were trying to figure out what was going on with the extraordinary group of Christian Rastas who seemed to hold some attraction for white people from the U.S. What was it? Just the marijuana? That seemed unlikely. They sensed something unusual was going on behind the scenes. During the raid, the cops discovered that one of the Jamaicans, Brother Keith, had a warrant out for his arrest from a years-old marijuana conviction. They arrested him. He was taken to Spanish Town Prison, where they trimmed his hair and beard. That was a significant event for someone who had assumed, and was perceived to hold, the office of high priest for the congregation. The intercessor between God and His people. That's how it was. That episode with Keith going to Spanish Town was ominous. It eventually proved to have enormously odious consequences for the Church.

Keith had to spend some time in prison. 51 days, to be exact. The number was significant to us because Psalm 51 is a special plea to God for mercy and forgiveness after weakness and temptation. Somehow Keith's weakness for the young girls was brought into the equation, but soon forgotten. An unsolvable unknown. After 51 days of backdoor negotiations, Keith was released by a special decree from Governor General Florizel Glasspole, the Queen of England's representative and the Viceroy to Jamaica. The hushed word among us, which we always considered to be gospel, was that \$4,000 U.S. in cash had secured the high-powered intercession. Money talks ... sometimes. What seems small to one man might be perceived to be a fortune to another. The exchange rate in the 70s was close to \$1 U.S. for \$1 Jamaican. Now it's about \$1 U.S. to \$150 Jamaican Dollars. It fluctuates. Another very significant happenstance occurred while Keith was in Spanish Town Prison. He met a low-life, streetwise punk. Keith took the failed getaway driver, gunman and accused murderer under his wing to be his personal jailhouse valet, a major status symbol in the joint. The young rude-boy of Indian descent, which is one of the diverse sets of ethnic communities on the island, would eventually manifest to be a real menace to all the brothers and sisters in Florida. I never knew his real name, but we'd gotten him a good set of fake IDs in the name of Robert F. DeMarco. We always called him "Johnny". There will be more about Johnny later. Much more.

When Keith was released from Spanish Town, he came to Stillwell Road in Constant Spring. Wally came over there from Mandeville, too. Keith getting his hair and beard trimmed off in prison was of significance to us according to our interpretation of Leviticus 21. Our untrimmed hair and beard represented the Godhead of man. We thought that the somewhat unkempt facet of grooming gave us a truer and more grounded connection with the Divine. But the entire notion of those Old Testament precepts becomes an immense pile of horse pucky when we'd lost the simple capacity to love, or really even to tolerate, one another. Is there hair in heaven? "Just take a little off the top, Pete." Whenever any of the brothers, whether voluntarily or forcefully by the authorities, buzzed off their locks of hair (locks, not dreadlocks), the cause was generally considered to be a result of their own fuckery. "Fuckery" is a catch-all Jamaican expression to describe just about anything disagreeable. If you're fuckery ... well then, you're just fuckery. But a universal code of conduct has yet to be truly adopted by the people. Fuckery for one may not be fuckery for another. So, that's what happened with Keith. He got trimmed. The loss of his Godhead was not deemed as fuckery in his case. It was considered the plight and suffering of a genuine, long-persecuted martyr. Go figure.

One of the memorable moments during my family's long stay at Stillwell Road in Constant Spring came shortly after Keith's release. We had our daily routines. Prayer, prayer and prayer again. One early afternoon, between prayer and prayer, the Jamaica Constabulary Force raided the house. That's the cops.

The po-lice. Lice on the poor. They were looking for the white people who may have overstayed their visas. But by then, Keith had Jamaican Immigration in his pocket, so our papers were all in order. But in their heathenous bloodlust, they'd stumbled upon a lot of cash. U.S. dollars. \$91,000 to be precise. Again, a Psalm was cited. Psalm 91. One of our dailies in morning oblation invoking God's protection. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Judy had just brought the cash down from Miami the previous day, and there it was, bundled for their convenience. After pissing themselves up, they confiscated it. But Keith's Q.C. (Queen's Counsel) got on it immediately, and the court ordered the scavengers to return the money. Of course, all the hullabaloo appeared in or on all the Island's media outlets. Gleaner (the island's major newspaper) headlines. And the Coptics were getting quite a reputation among the people by then anyway, both the rich and the poor. Judy actually had to go to the court and claim the money as her own. She was always a faithful warrior throughout the saga, not only to me, but toward all those she counted as her friends. Which was just about everybody. But that wasn't the end of the story. A couple nights later, between prayer and prayer again, four rude-boy gunmen came in on us with pistols drawn. We had no guns. Not even a pea-shooter. Another four or five gang members stood guard outside. They'd come to rob us. Hell, 'The Gleaner' said we had 91 Grand. In cash. They wanted it. Keith didn't back down, though. He just kept insisting the money was gone already, even though it was locked in a safe in one of the back bedrooms. They tried to intimidate us. One of those savages slapped me across the chest with a machete, only turning the blade at the last moment to make it a slap instead of a chop. Judy had a couple hundred dollars in her small house around back. Two or three others came up with a little cash to appease the barbarians, who were trying to get away as quickly as possible. Finally, they realized it was a dead end and left, stealing one of Keith's sports cars and a pickup to make their getaway. The word quickly went out on the ruthless robbers. Within a couple of days, several had been caught, and at least two were gunned down by the cops like rabid dogs. I remember a plainclothes cop (it wasn't Joe Allen, and it wasn't Warren, a couple of notorious cops on the Coptic payroll) told Keith at the small counter in the kitchen, "Ah five shot me gee 'im, you know, Niah!" (He'd put five chunks of lead in one of the carcasses.) It must have been "Trinity", another notorious and ruthless cop. One of the corpses had about 45 or 50 holes in it. That plainclothes cop was taking credit for five of 'em. Keith's response was simple. "Satan has his gunmen; God has his gunmen, too." Bang, bang!

It was about that time when I got a reprieve from the spiritual purgatory Jamaica had become for me. Though a tropical paradise by every physical standard, traditionally the island has been known as "Hell" among the poor people because of its history of brutality and suffering. I could feel it.

At that juncture in our story, Brother David, who lived in a small cabin in the outback of western Massachusetts, needed help. God bless him. He suffered from a debilitating stomach ulcer and found it difficult to do all the things necessary to move large amounts of ganja in the Old Bay State. I gladly volunteered. I couldn't get out of that tropical morass fast enough. And another factor was involved, too. Although the naval wing of our operation was experiencing a temporary hiatus, when they got a bigger boat, they'd be afloat. Again. They were going to need another crew member, too. So I had my sights set on the sea. I was by no means a sailor, but I'd do quite well in a pinch.

14 Rugantino, Ganja Central

I remember departing from Mandeville. Judy, the kids and I packed all of our earthly possessions into a couple of recycled suitcases and headed north. Though I'd been stuck in Jamaica for many, many months, I was ecstatic to be heading to my homeland. One of the reasons I'd been stuck on the island for so long was because I'd had no ID. By chance, on a trip up to Iowa to see her parents and give the kids some time with their grandparents, Judy had gotten a blank Iowa birth certificate from a friend. It had the embossed seal already in place, along with the necessary signature, and only needed a name and a birth date. I knew I'd be able to get supporting documents (i.e. driver's license, voter's registration, Social Security, etc.) once I got to the States. Tommy Taylor, a heroic, disabled Vietnam veteran, had provided that invaluable piece of paper for me. Thanks, Tommy.

David and his wife, Chris, owned a remote cabin on several acres of wooded land amid the beautiful hill country of central Massachusetts. They'd both offered to share their humble home with us while we all helped facilitate the needs of the Church in Jamaica by selling as much product as we could and then taking the dough south. The whole experience of moving to Massachusetts was very liberating for me. I'd been in Jamaica for what seemed like an eternity, moving from Sirgany Drive to Trelawny, from Trelawny to Mandeville, from Mandeville to seaside and then to Stillwell Road. I was often separated from Judy and the kids, and there were certainly no accommodations for conjugal privileges, especially not under those living conditions. In many ways, it was even more restrictive than prison. Forget about it! It's almost impossible to imagine now how we actually lived under and perpetuated that malicious, horseshit hierarchy, but we did. Hindsight, huh?

After a short stint in Central Massachusetts, Judy and the kids found some nice accommodations at one of the church properties in Miami, and I volunteered for the 5-man crew aboard the Rugantino for its maiden voyage under the Coptic banner. What a boat that was! First of all, Rugantino was a legendary figure from Roman culture. He represented irreverence, courage and cunning, which was an apt description of the boat's new captain and crew. It was a 55-foot, steel-hulled motor sailer. The diesel-assisted ketch hauled the freight countless times from Jamaica, and even carried the first of our three trips up from Colombia. My only previous experience on the water prior to that new adventure had been a couple of canoe rides on the Cedar River as a teenager in Iowa, and a seven-day voyage across the oftentimes turbulent North Atlantic in March, 1962, aboard the troopship USNS Rose. The old rust bucket had sailed from New York Harbor to Bremerhaven, Germany, delivering me to my permanent U.S. Army assignment in

USAREUR after basic training in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri and a 3-month stint in Cartography School at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. So I was captivated by the whole prospect of sailing the high seas. And we were going down to a tropical island to pick up a boatload of ganja. Things were definitely looking up. Duppy was the captain of the boat, and at the time the most knowledgeable sailor among us. Brad, his younger brother, was the first mate. I was the cook, originally, until much later, when Brother Jeffrey took over those duties. I can't say that I was much of a cook, but somebody had to do it, so I volunteered without realizing the drudgery of the task. The other crew members changed with almost every voyage. Gary, Bobby, Sheldon, Pops, Randy, Chuck, RamRam, Lance, Billy, Michael O'Hare and Michael "Jaws" Collison. And a few more over the years, for sure. It was my maiden voyage as a maritime smuggler, and Rugantino's maiden voyage as a ganja runner. It was a pretty cool trip.

By that time, the Rush Brothers were seasoned, sea-going maestros. Old salts. Duppy was his usual ill-tempered, irascible self. He had to impatiently put up with my initial ineptness at the helm. We did 2-hour watches, 2 on-8 off. A 5-man rotation. I remember poor Duppy having to get up from his bunk late at night to come up on deck and get me back on course during my watch. The sail had been flapping, and the beam had slammed over to the wrong side of the boat from me absent-mindedly drifting off course. Well, somebody had to be the Captain, and it was Duppy. I got better, though. Because all of our water tanks were filled to the brim with diesel fuel for long-range capability, we had to take a dump over the aft rail, no matter what the weather was. I soon learned to hang my butt over the rear railing like any experienced "old tar" and take care of business. And Duppy got grumpier.

We sailed to Nassau and spent a few days in the old pirate port relaxing and stocking up on fresh produce. We had a predetermined schedule and had a specific date and a specific time for our rendezvous at the seaside property on the south coast of Jamaica to pick up the load. We sailed down through the Bahamas at a leisurely pace. We had time enough to explore a couple of uninhabited islands as we meandered our way through the chain of small, pristine cays. The only way it could possibly have been any better would have been if I'd had Judy with me on one of those isolated sandy beaches, as I often imagined. The thought of her plump bare derriere frolicking over the white sands is forever emblazoned on my soul. I will never grow weary of the image.

Gradually we moved on south, past the Exumas and around the eastern tip of Cuba, through the Windward Passage. Then we spent two nights anchored in the Gulf of Gonave off Haiti's coast. We were poised and ready to make the run at the appointed hour. The entire adventure was new and exciting for me.

I was part of a crew smuggling a good-sized load of marijuana into Florida from an exotic Caribbean island. Praise God and live!

We loaded up the ganja at the seaside port sanctuary. Brother Shine had made up a big, juicy beef roast, and we replenished our supply of fresh fruits and vegetables. We fired up the pipe and set sail for the Gulf Coast of Florida. It was a smooth voyage, nice weather, calm seas. Not bad at all. Offloading our precious cargo at the Cross-Florida Barge Canal would become almost routine for us in the years to come.

The waterway, just south of Inglis, Florida, was the perfect port to accommodate our clandestine activities. It was part of the largest unfinished public works project in American history. The intent of its proponents had been to traverse Central Florida with a navigable channel from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic Ocean. That would provide a much shorter, more efficient route than the practice of circumventing the State around the Florida Keys. But environmental concerns and a strong vocal opposition caused President Nixon to defund the program in 1971. The result left a deep, fifteen-mile long water channel constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It went from a point on the coast just north of the Crystal River Nuclear Power Plant all the way to Lake Rousseau. The channel was 150' wide and 12' deep. A very neat and tidy slice into the scruffy terrain. And no one lived anywhere near it. Voila! Clifton and Brad had run across the smugglers' dream port while cruising the coast looking for some place to pull off our pipe dream. And it cost nothing. The manifestation of such a dire necessity was taken as a clear sign that God was intervening again on our behalf. That's how we played it. Prayer and a multitude of burnt offerings (the kutchie pipe) were always the underlying marrow of everything we did. That was our life - smoking, praying and smuggling. We ate a little something once in a while too.

On the south side of the channel, there was a rough dirt road that probably hadn't been graded since the engineers carved it out from the flat topography. Alongside the road was a tall berm that had been created from all the displaced dirt from the channel dredging. It was a lot of earth and made for a formidable hill. At the west end of the road, seven miles from U.S. Highway 98, was a seldom-used, cleared-out space that served as an undeveloped campground area. The site provided a reasonable cause for us to bring buses, fifth-wheel trailers and large recreational campers down the rough track to the end, which was the Gulf. The Rugantino was the right boat at the right time for our growth, and the canal made it all possible. The boat was durable, low-maintenance and low-key. It was stable in rough weather, and could carry a nice load. Over a span of about three years we made dozens of moves on the Rugantino. It was a workhorse.

When the weather was nice, which was most of the time, we'd troll a line off the stern, waiting to hear the buzz of the reel after a deepwater hit. We always kept the yellowfin tuna and the dolphinfish (mahi-mahi). Freshly filleted deepwater fish steaks whenever we wanted, and butterflied mahi-mahi dipped in a seasoned mixture of cornmeal and flour and fried in coconut oil. Good eatin'. The brothers particularly loved the cow dolphin's roe bag when I'd fry it in garlic and butter. Those boys loved that stuff. I could take it or leave it. Mostly leave it. We lived pretty healthy and pretty good at sea. Most of the time, life was uncomplicated. Sometimes, when the sea got rough, you'd better hold on. Almost everyone I sailed with over the years had a bout with sea-sickness at one time or another, but I never got sick. Although Iowa boys are expected to be "landlubbers," my inner-ear issues must have been resolved in a previous lifetime. I was as crusty as Popeye.

It became a normal pattern for us that, as the boat got closer and closer to its final destination, Duppy would radio ahead to the brothers on land and coordinate the exact time for the rendezvous. We made dozens of those trips. The canal was our private little custom-made port, constructed for us by the best environmental engineers in the world, the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

Initially, I served as a crew member. Later, because of logistical needs, I worked with the land crew. Several times I went on the boat and then got off with the herb when we reached shore. It was simple. I always loved doing whatever I could to further the expeditious movements of the herb. I crewed on the Rugantino, the Our Seas, Peter's Boat and a double-ended Tancook schooner whose name I have forgotten. Mostly to Jamaica, but we also made three spectacular ventures to Colombia in 1977. Sometimes we'd set up a campsite all the way down the dirt road at the very end of the bumpy canal road. En masse. A few times, sisters and children (really, mostly just White David, Brian, and Jennifer a few times) joined us, for days at a time camping and waiting. By establishing our presence, we were able to keep other would-be campers away from our spot. But we never really had a problem in that regard. After the load came in, we'd transport the sizable quantity of bales to the stash. The stash was a mini-farm set up a few miles north of Dunnellon, Florida. It was situated conveniently on two five-acre tracts at the end of a cul-de-sac in the sparsely-populated development of Rainbow Springs. No neighbors in sight. It provided the privacy we needed to serve our agenda. The west side of the unpaved road was configured as a small farm. There was a mobile home, a huge barn, chicken coops, a spacious aviary for exotic species (peacocks, pheasants and guinea fowl), and a few smaller buildings and living quarters. There was a small, fenced-in pasture where we kept several goats and a milk cow. The livestock were raised for food. Leviticus clean, as much as is humanly possible. We adhered to Levitical dietary laws, the cleanliness and separation laws, and all the

holiness codes Moses had established back in the day. But we really didn't give a crap about man's ridiculous laws attempting to regulate our sacrament. The herb must be free for man to be free. That's how we saw it.

Across the road was another seemingly separate arrangement. It had several living-quarters spaces and equipment storage areas. We always referred to that comfortable compound as "The Ranch." Besides serving as a perfect stash place, it was also a refuge for many of the brothers and sisters who needed a little down time. Buried under the big barn, on the farm-looking side of the road, were three massive (8' X 8' X 8') subterranean stainless-steel vaults and three large pre-formed fiberglass septic tanks. A staggering amount of herb could be hidden from sight and stored for as long as was necessary in the stashes. The barn had dirt floors with a generous layer of loose hay to camouflage the supposedly nefarious stockpiles. The place had an air of "good-old-boy" style living about it. But for us, the inconspicuous little farm was Ganja Central.

15 Duppy, Dauntless – Coptic, Jamaica

Duppy was one of a kind. I guess you could say that about everybody to some extent, but he really was. Whenever we made a move to Jamaica, we'd load up the boat with supplies and gifts for the Church down south. Usually it was the things that were difficult, or even impossible, to get on the rather impoverished island. Everyday stuff. Laundry detergent was scarce and costly. Car and truck parts were in constant demand. Equipment, small appliances, a Delco generator, shoes and boots, tires, clothes, even several motorcycles. It was like a Home Depot showroom. Anything we could fit on the boat clogged the staterooms and berths. If it was needed down there, we tried to bring it aboard. It became a regular routine.

As the scope of the War on Drugs intensified, the Coast Guard set up blockades in both the Windward Passage and the Yucatan Passage. Those were the primary sea lanes coming up to the United States from South America and the Caribbean area. It was a real and present danger for us. One time in particular, we were on our way to Jamaica loaded up with cargo for the Church. We actually had truck tires lashed down in passageways. We had plenty of supplies and plenty of junk for the brothers and sisters on the island. The U.S. Coast Guard intercepted us in the Windward Passage on our way south. Maritime law allowed for them to board any vessel that was registered in the U.S. without regard for the globally-accepted 12-mile International Water provision. Any vessel outside that protected barrier was shielded from interference. But we were registered in the United States, so we were subject to their authority. The USCGC Dauntless attempted to pull us over on the high seas. They radioed for our vessel to "heave to" for boarding. The order basically meant for us to stop for inspection. Duppy ignored the order, and we continued along through the briny sea at a leisurely pace. They persisted and sidled closer, again giving us the same command over a powerful megaphone. "Heave to and prepare for boarding. This is the United States Coast Guard." We could see that! But Duppy wasn't tryin' to hear that bullshit! He didn't consult anybody before going on the offensive. He radioed the Coast Guard station in Miami and reported that a piracy was in progress. He told them an unknown vessel was trying to board us, and he gave them our coordinates. There was a big drama unfolding. It took a while for the Miami Coast Guard Station to realize that the "pirate alarm" was referring to their own patrol boat, United States Coast Guard Cutter Dauntless. It was dauntlessly performing its dauntless duties to be diligently dauntless. They were attempting to board a suspect pleasure craft that was registered in the U.S. So they had jurisdiction. Here we go.

We were really pumped up. We knew the only contraband we had on board was just a few pounds of herb for our personal use, and they had no chance of finding that. Especially without dogs. We became

antagonistically bold, which was pretty-much how we always behaved in any crisis. They told us to heave to again over the megaphone, but we, led by Captain Duppy, refused and just kept moving. Finally, to show us they meant business, they fired a 50-caliber machine gun across the bow of our boat and threatened severe action if we did not heed the command. Duppy killed the engine, and hove to. We slowed to a stop. We watched them lower two tenders into the water, and more than a dozen uniformed Coast Guard sailors dropped into them and set out to search us for what we might be concealing. They did all this under the pretense of checking us out for mandatory safety equipment. That was the ruse, of course. Okay.

Many of the things we did during those peak years of prosperity-without-scrutiny seem beyond comprehension now. And that particular encounter with our avowed enemy was one of them. As the dinghies approached us and got within hearing range, we started in on the unsuspecting young mariners with a barrage of accusations regarding violations of the Law of Moses ... by them! We were all very familiar with the tactic. That's how we conducted ourselves. We taunted them with graphic descriptions of willful misconduct (i.e. oral sex, masturbation, homosexuality, bestiality and some more shit). Of course, we used other, more graphic and colorful terminology to describe their irrefutable transgressions against God. They'd never heard anything like that before. Even Baptist preachers half drunk on vodka and infidelity didn't blow fire like that! And while the verbal assault was going on, their search team had come up empty. Nada! Not a seed. By then, those guys were ready to get the hell off our boat. Leave those Looney-Tunes longhairs to their own devices and hope they sink into the deepest part of the sea.

After a clash with authorities, especially when we felt we'd gotten the better of it, we would always rehash the incident over and over, appraise every aspect of what had happened, and rejoice in the various ways the spirit had interceded on our behalf, making us the apparent victors. "His truth will be our shield and our buckler." An absolute guarantee of safety. We fired up the big diesels and the kutchie pipe and resumed our voyage to the "Isle of Patmos", the isle with the most pot. Naturally, that would have been Jamaica. That kind of sagacious wordplay gave us hours of joy and a love of all things sacred to the Lord. Big Bob was a savant in that area of crafty comedy. It all made sense to us. And there were a few dollars involved, also, to heighten the adventure.

Things were going incredibly well for us. Beyond anyone's wildest expectations. Every successful ganja move increased the Coptic coffers. Every new acquisition validated our ideological aspirations and seemed to elevate our awareness of the long-range goal. The interpretation of the prophecy we lived by regarding our faith in the doctrine was unfolding before us for all to see. In Jamaica, the name "Coptic" became magical, a password to prosperity. Hundreds, then thousands, of Jamaicans, primarily black

genealogical descendants of slavery and the oppressive desolation it brought to the people, were becoming conscious of a different perspective of their very existence. They had something real to embrace. The downtrodden, despairing sons and daughters of bondage, suddenly became aware that they were actually the true Israelites of the Bible, the chosen children of God. Imagine that! As the Church prospered, multitudes improved their lives and prospered, too. Keith Gordon had the unique ability to make people feel in harmony with the Spirit, however elusive or disappointing that hope had always previously proven to be for them. He really did possess an ancient spirit.

Keith was a prominent figure in the lives of the multitudes who revered him and what he was able to accomplish for them and for the dignity of forlorn, displaced Africans. And he had tapped into a seemingly endless source of cash. To many, that validated the perception that Brother Keith was a prophet, a priest and a king; the chosen patriarch of the Church. In that role, he was able to gain the attention of the various social classes of Jamaican society. Many of the people, who quite likely would have looked down their noses at him when he was a street vendor (higgler) of callaloo patties in Coronation Market, were now at his beck and call. Whatever Keith wanted, someone was always willing to provide, and be rewarded handsomely for their efforts. Just having Keith pay attention to them, even for a moment, was a reward in itself. The white people had always had run-ins with Jamaican Immigration over visas. Keith managed to get a semi-important immigration official, Rupee Edwards, in his pocket, and we never had another problem with visas. Police, Queen's Counsels, judges, soldiers, government officials and various other upper echelon aristocrats answered the call. And the criminal gang leaders loved Niah's benevolence. Other voices throughout history had risen up and inspired the people to resist oppression through self-help and the dignity of their own sovereignty. Keith not only understood and personified that spirit, he, more importantly, had tapped into the "Money Tree". The real "Money Tree". Endless stacks of American greenbacks. That can get some shit done.

There existed among the Church members, especially and specifically the white sisters and brothers, a humble and true selflessness, a willingness to put others' sufferings ahead of their own, if that's possible. Well, we did it. I believe we did just that. But can that ethic, that party line, that way of thinking, ever end well for the hopeful? Not likely.

The red, gold and green colors of Rastafari spread across the island like never before. Businesses sprang up, huge agricultural tracts were purchased for those with farming ambitions. Vast and numerous residential properties. Trucking companies, fishing boats, freighters, pleasure boats, work boats, planes and automobiles multiplied like rabbits in the spring. Real, tangible prosperity. Nobody had ever seen anything

like it. Piles and piles of cash. A few of the operations may have been in the black financially on occasion, but the real lifeblood for absolutely everything under the "Coptic" banner was the ganja business in America. That's what buttered the bread. The herb had to be acquired in Jamaica and packaged for export. That's true. And it was a daunting task. Keith made all that happen seamlessly. Most of the time, anyway, though there was always some nefarious bullshit going on under the surface. Keith ran a very disciplined operation. He purchased the weed, had it pressed up and wrapped for shipping and always handled the loading process without any problems. But the actual smuggling, the offloading in America (with the places and manpower to do it), the stashing, the transporting, the distribution, and most importantly, the collection of huge amounts of money and returning it to Jamaica was all done by the tight cadre of faithful, white, middle-class Americans whose unfathomable dedication and honesty allowed for the Church to blossom exponentially. "Gone is the middle wall of partition between us." We were rollin'.

Brother Wally was one of the Church elders. Walter Wells. He had supposedly walked with Brother "Louva" Williams, who was perceived by us to have been the forerunner to that supremely historical event: namely, the resurrection of Ivy. Like John the Baptist was to Jesus, that's how Louva was to Ivy. Many will now deny that we ever said or believed such preposterous nonsense, but we did. In our lore, when we said that someone had walked with someone else, we meant that the former had been an adherent of the latter's teachings. So Wally, as were Ivy and many others, was a disciple of Brother Louva Williams. Dennis Ivy, Brother Ivy's oldest son (he was probably 12 or 13 years old when many of those events occurred), was disgracefully treated by the Church-core surrounding Keith and Wally over the years because he refused to become a malleable scrotum swinger like the rest of us. Dennis claims that Louva Williams couldn't tolerate Wally much. And Wally was never at Ivy's gospel camp near Papine while I was there. Wally couldn't take Ivy, and Ivy didn't put up with Wally's spiritual arrogance and shenanigans. nor his mammoth dose of grandiosity.

Anyway, Wally didn't come amongst us during our fledgling attempts to keep the purity of Ivy alive. Not until early 1973. I first saw him at Sirgany Drive when Keith brought him around for a few minutes before moving him up to Trelawny. The hushed "scoop" was that this guy was Moses. Holy shit! Pass the commandments! Who wasn't trembling in their sandals? At first he stayed in a small lean-to attached to the makeshift temple structure. Dirt floor, corrugated-metal roof, a dingy sheet of recycled plywood for a bed, and a short trip down the slope to the outhouse when Mother Nature called. I'd first been introduced to the concept of oblation upon my arrival at Ivy's gospel camp. It had always been a thing of reverence and inspiration. I looked forward to it early every morning and late every afternoon when the day was usually finished for most. The oblation never seemed to fail to revitalize me, and I always felt a real sense of

temperament and manners for the privilege of participating in the service. Absolutely invigorating. Every time! The oblation consisted of a series of Psalms recited from memory, in unison, and a few gospel hymns chanted aloud. And maybe some kumina drum rhythms accompanied by singing and dancing. Those were regular daily services. Very inspirational, though I didn't have much of a voice for the sweet melodies.

Wally was a stickler for frequent and interminable oblations. Prior to his arrival up in Trelawny, we'd have two oblations every day, wherever we happened to be, even in jail. Once he got up to the country, oblations increased to three per day. Mandatory! 4 a.m., 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. Four, three and eight became the mantra of the mindless robots, like me. Wally rarely participated, except perhaps from the repose of his bed. When he did come into the room for the chant, it was always after the arduous drone of off-key vocals had been going on for a good while. Then his entry was like the appearance of the Pope on the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City. Awe, admiration and acquiescent obeisance. Wally knew how to take the fun out of the party. He was not known for his good humor. The kids wouldn't go anywhere near him unless they were called up on the carpet for some perceived infraction and humiliated. Wally was a mean old man.

Wally was also blind, or near blind. He had cataracts that made it appear as though he was staring at something you couldn't see. Because of his disability, he needed a constant attendant. Most of the time it was Brother Sheriff. Wally had been Sheriff's mentor and daily antagonist since his youth. He, in turn, was Wally's sidekick, servant and disciple. Sheriff would always be around from then on, wherever Wally settled. Trelawny, seaside, Mandeville, Stillwell Road, and finally, "Coptic Heights" in St. Thomas Parish, east of town. Town being Kingston.

16 Duppy Deeds, Boating Adventures

The brothers got "Peter's Boat". Renamed from "Framar", I can't remember the exact process that produced the name for us, but there was never any doubt that the boat was, indeed, "Peter's Boat". We were anticipating and praying for the big catch. The vessel had been built for the United States Navy during World War II. It had been some type of an escort ship. The hull was triple-plank mahogany. It was powered by two massive Detroit diesels. Brad and Duppy were proud, and so was everyone else in the Church who knew about it. Somewhere in its past, the craft had been owned by Lockheed Martin aircraft and converted into a luxury yacht for their executives (or something like that). It was nice. 107 feet long; all the amenities of the era; state-of-the-art navigational equipment; staterooms and heads like plush, 5-star hotel rooms; and a panoramic cockpit.

On the maiden voyage (at least the maiden voyage for us) we cleared out all the staterooms except one small area midship. We had to make room for the portable fuel tanks on the way down, along with plenty of goods for the Jamaican kingdom. And then there'd be hundreds of blocks of ganja filling the space on the way home.

We were on our way south, a couple of days out. Broad daylight. Somebody noticed smoke coming from the captain's cabin. We pulled open the door and smoke billowed out. Thick smoke! Duppy freaked out. It's the only time I had ever really seen him like that. He was out of sorts to say the least. Fire on a wooden-hulled boat 100 miles from anywhere. He got on the radio and sounded the alarm to the U.S. Coast Guard. Who else could we call on when the chips were really down. Whatever? They couldn't get to us, not until the boat would be a pile of sizzling ashes on a frothy sea. We had to find the fire and put it out ourselves.

After some initial panic, Red Beard held a damp towel over his nose and mouth to keep from inhaling the smoke, and then he crawled, low to the floor, into the thick white murkiness. The smoke seemed to be less dense down low. It took what seemed like forever. The rest of us were all set to clasp hands so we'd stay connected, and go searching for him. Just then, the heroic, red-blooded, red-haired Red Beard emerged out of the thick cloud of smoke victorious. He'd found the source of the problem.

The king-sized mattress we'd stacked against the stateroom wall to make space for the anticipated illicit cargo had caught fire. A spark from a corroded wall outlet had jumped to the mattress. Red Beard had

flipped it down to the floor, and went back in with a few buckets of water to douse the smoldering fire completely. There was a tremendous amount of smoke from something that turned out to be only a minimal threat. Some drawers had to be washed out that night, though.

Another time, we were towing a cigarette-style boat to Jamaica. It was behind "Peter's Boat". It was a sleek rum-runner. Brad designed it and then had it built at a boatyard in Miami. The forest-green speed merchant was aptly dubbed "Zion". But once it was finished, Brad realized that, though she was a very nice boat, she wasn't really up for the tasks that they'd had in mind for her. So it was decided to take her to Jamaica to be a part of the Church's growing fishing business down there. We had a thick hawser fastened to the stern of "Peter's Boat" and we were towing "Zion". The seas were smooth; the breeze light. Me and RamRam were on the aft deck chilling out when he decided he needed something from "Zion". What, I can't remember. The heavy rope was taut between the two boats as we cruised along. It was a straight line. Tight. RamRam said he was going to cross that span between the two boats by going hand-over-hand on the hawser. When it was stretched out, it was well above the water level, but when Ram-o got near the halfway point, his body weight pulled down on the rope until half his body was submerged, dragging in the warm ocean. Yeah! If he had let go at that point, we probably never would have found him. I was frozen to the aft rail. I couldn't just run up to the cockpit and lose sight of him in case he let go, but I felt like I had to get the message to them to stop. My indecision lasted long enough for RamRam to actually save himself from the powerful drag of the sea. He managed to pull himself up onto Zion's deck. I still can't imagine how he did that. It was a miracle.

The only time any of the sisters ever went on any of the moves was on "Peter's Boat". Sister Anne and Sister Irene (forever "Bright Eyes"), who are actually siblings, sailed down south with us one time. But they didn't return with us when we had the herb. A situation like that was not really conducive to a co-educational crew.

We made a couple of successful moves with "Peter's Boat" before it was involved in an incident off the coast of Jamaica. The Jamaican Coast Guard attempted to board it. Somebody got a little jumpy and threw our smoking stash (marijuana) overboard. It was just a few pounds. The Jamaican marauders (their Coast Guard) fished it out. It was enough for them to make an arrest. So Duppy and another of the brothers, Billy, spent nearly a year in the Spanish Town Prison for that infraction of the marijuana laws. And then the Jamaican government stole our beautiful yacht under dubious pretenses. They added it to their own fleet, which totaled one after the purloined acquisition. "Peter's Boat" may have later appeared in a Jamaican movie, I think, but that was the end of Coptic's ownership. C'est la vie. Just another casualty of the conflict.

At one point, Duppy found the boat of his dreams. It was a 79-foot, double-ended Tancook schooner. It was sleek. Teak decks. All the amenities that old salts like Popeye and Duppy valued. He loved that thing. It was like a manifestation of his own Spirit. I specifically remember one move we made with it. Michael O'Hara was part of the crew then. We always smoked a blend of ganja and Craven "A" cigarette tobacco in a clay chillum pipe during our services, and throughout the rest of each day, too. If we were awake, we were smoking. During a storm, we'd be passing the pipe. And there was another ritual that went along with smoking from the "kutchie" pipe. Occasionally, the pipe would get clogged with residue and need cleaning. The cleaning process was to place it amid a pile of wood coals, and after the coals burnt down to ashes the pipe would be fresh again. That day the pipe was clogged, so somebody needed to burn it out. I made a small fire in a steel pot and put the pipe into the pot with the coals. Then I set the pot on the deck and forgot about it. The result was not pretty. The heat from the pot charred a 12-inch diameter black circle into the teak deck. That unbridled act of stupidity was actually more grievous to Duppy than if I'd just kicked him in the nuts. Being so thoughtless was humiliating but in character, nonetheless. That beautiful vessel later got stolen anyway, by an underhanded old acquaintance of Brother Sheldon's whom the brothers unwittingly trusted. Another time an old crook and relative of one of the sisters stole 4000 pounds of herb from us, invading a Tallahassee stash-house residence that, as a real estate agent, he'd assisted us in obtaining. The brothers never sought retribution. We always just moved on after nefarious thugs like that manifested themselves at various times throughout our odyssey. We never had guns. During all the raids the police ever conducted on us over the years, whether in Jamaica or in the U.S., they never found a gun. Nor any semblance of a weapon. Because there weren't any. We always felt our defense was Divine rather than carnal. That's probably a good way to get shot or robbed ... or both.

At times, we were able to get inside information about police investigations, their movements and other political shenanigans. One such tidbit we obtained through some connections in the various bureaucracies was that the U.S. Coast Guard had a file on Duppy. He was known to them as "The Bahamas' Fox". How fitting that alias actually was. I can't say how true the story was, but we had a lot of fun with that little "leak" from our adversary. Duppy went into the Coptic Hall of Fame immediately. He was the fox that never was; the one who had always eluded them. Like Bigfoot.

Another time, the brothers were coming up from Jamaica dry. They had no ganja. That's the only time I remember that happening. I can't remember the exact circumstances why they didn't have herb, but they didn't. It's a damn good thing, too. They were stopped and boarded by a Cuban patrol boat as they were

coming through the Yucatan Passage, perhaps a little too close to El Presidente Fidel's domain. They were arrested, and the crew spent some time in a Cuban prison before an arrangement could be reached. Money was exchanged, but I don't remember the exact details. Red Beard and Duppy were on that excursion. Maybe Brad, too. Somebody who's still alive knows the details of that adventure. And the beat goes on.

17 Colombia

1977 presented some abnormal political skulduggery in Jamaica which had very real effects on the marijuana industry. Michael Manley and his PNP (People's National Party) were serving their second term in power. P.J. (Percival James) Patterson was a young, ambitious Minister of Defense for the socialist faction controlling the island. Behind the scenes, the United States had provided Jamaica with surplus helicopters and ruinous pesticides to help locate and eradicate ganja. Obviously, no one, not even the formidable U.S. government, would ever be able to get rid of the controversial vegetable matter. But P.J. and his nasty set of vultures were doing their best to present a significant hindrance to the suffering farmers who grew the weed, and anyone else who may be prospering from the illegal activity. There was herb that year, but quantities were limited by the illegitimate cabal of parasitic vigilantes. There was not nearly enough ganja to satisfy the voracious appetite of the Church's export enterprise. We needed ganja and plenty of it!

In life, Providence often intervenes. Many of the events regarding our clandestine business seemed to have that providential air. Keith had set up a fishing business operating mostly around Pedro Bank, a small submerged bank of sand and coral southwest of Jamaica. It's a well-known and plentiful source of fish for the local industry. Reginald Toney, a skillful seaman from Guyana, was the captain of the Coptic vessel used to haul in the daily catch. By chance, or Providence, a boatload of weed was making its way north to the U.S. from Colombia when it had engine trouble. The vessel and its crew were stranded near Pedro Bank without an emergency plan. Somehow, Toney had been able to make contact with them and learn of their plight. He managed to get the parts necessary for them to get on their way again, saving their asses from whatever other fate may have awaited them. Then they proceeded on with their voyage to America. That fortuitous meeting in the middle of nowhere produced an extremely beneficial connection for all parties involved. The Colombian mastermind and captain of the successful movement from his homeland to the U.S. came to Jamaica when the trip was finished. He met up with Keith and a few of the Church's smuggling lieutenants. A plot was hatched, and the rest became part of Coptic history.

We made three successful trips to the South American republic that summer. The first was aboard the old steel war horse, Rugantino. For the other two, we used a sleek, 68-foot aluminum-hulled yacht, the "Our Seas". That baby was a real step up for the Coptic navy. Three enormous Detroit diesels powered the sleek vessel. No more sails! It had a huge cargo door at sea level to facilitate our plan. When the brothers initially got the boat, it had been named "Four Seasons". A little ingenuity from one of the brothers, and we

converted it to "Our Seas" by knocking off a few letters from its original designation. I remember hanging off the stern on a makeshift scaffold with RamRam as we painted over the F first, and then the O-N-S at the end, using shiny, white enamel as we redubbed our newest acquisition. Clever.

The first trip to Colombia on the Rugantino meant we'd be encountering new waters. The South Caribbean. The only information we had for the rendezvous in Columbia were the coordinates (latitude and longitude) for a spot off the coastline a short distance from Santa Marta. And we'd received that information via our shortwave radio setup. A mistake had been made. The coordinates we got were exactly 1-degree off to the east (about 65 miles at that latitude) from where we were supposed to be. When we got within striking distance of the rendezvous, Duppy and Brad realized something was amiss when they spotted Aruba in the distance. After a few frantic radio exchanges with the brothers at Star Island, they finally figured out the mistake. We had to rearrange the logistics, but there would be a 24-hour change in our ETA. Eventually, it all worked out. The locals from around Santa Marta loaded us up with excellent Colombian herb using primitive dugout canoes to transport the bales from shore to our boat. The poor indigenous natives didn't speak English, and none of us were conversant in Spanish. We gave them some T-shirts and other little trinkets, but we hadn't been prepared to gift them properly. We wrapped up the operation and set off with the pot for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. U.S.A. here we come.

Once we got back to Florida, we offloaded without drama and took everything over to the ranch. When we started looking over the treasure from the "Gateway to South America", we realized a few things immediately. There were various grades of herb ranging from damn good to superb. The worst of it was very good. And every bit of it was much better than the crap we'd recently been bringing up from Jamaica. Yep! We'd always had such good herb when we first started bringing it up, but, as the commercial enterprise became the focus, the quality had progressively diminished to a shamefully low level. We'd been smoking and selling doodoo, but no one could say doodoo for fear of being labeled "fuckery". But really, our product had degenerated to fuckery. For long stretches, we smoked herb that tasted like moldy old socks. I haven't actually smoked moldy old socks, but it's still an apt analogy. It was difficult to market such garbage. We had a few blocks that were referred to as "Dougie's bush". That shit was irredeemable. It couldn't sell in Iowa after sitting there for months, maybe longer. I took it over to Massachusetts with a load of other less desirable product. Some of it sold, but "Dougie's bush", a caricature of a large bird's nest, sat around until we finally just destroyed it. Burnt it up. And not in the pipe!

At that point in our ongoing saga, most of the brothers would do damn near anything to get their hands on what we called "Sweetie". Sweetie was our slangy code word for the "good shit". The sweet-

smelling, sweet-tasting nectar of God. Ambrosia. That's how we saw it. Sometimes, to our great delight, Brother Sal brought us various grades of "sweetie" from the west coast. Thai sticks. The real ones. Delicious buds neatly secured to a narrow strip of bamboo with microscopic monofilament line. A real treat. The sweet herb had become a rarity in our everyday consumption and during prayer. It was nowhere to be found among the tons and tons of Jamaican "Cali" we had lying around in our underground storage rooms. Commercialism had devoured our collective integrity. We had become what we loathed. Merchants of bunk! In Hindu mythology, "Kali" is synonymous with strength and potency. The Colombian herb was far more "Kali" than our "Cali". How had that happened? But the boys from up north who were helping sort out the Colombian treasure were ecstatic at the prospect of having some really good weed to sell. It was all a very marketable product. Now that was certainly something to give thanks for. Praise God and live!

Brad and Duppy got their new boat after the first trip to Colombia. The "Our Seas". It had plenty of cargo space, and we improvised the rest. All the staterooms and heads were cleared out and made available to cram with rectangular bales. Keith doubled down with Angelo, the head of the Colombian side of our scheme. Cliff gives a detailed narrative of events the night we loaded Our Seas up for the first time in his book, "Ganja Warrior Priest". I was on the boat that night, so my perspective was from the sea. I had actually helped Cliff hide the bundles of cash (nearly \$2 million) in the hollow fiberglass dinghy before we left Miami. It was stuffed. In 1977 that was a tidy sum. Then, we'd stowed the little boat on board "Our Seas" and didn't trouble it again until Clifton came out to get it that night. That's how the brothers paid Angelo for the coveted bales of Colombian gold and Colombian red that we loaded aboard the Our Seas that night. That stuff really gave us a boost. The cash return was unbelievable too ... and fast! To God be the glory.

Our Seas had range limitations because of the fuel capacity and no sails to augment it. When we loaded up in Jamaica or Colombia, it was always done clandestinely. Subsequently, we had no provision arranged to refuel, which meant we had to have enough fuel on board when we left Florida to make it all the way down and all the way back. It took a lot of diesel fuel. The solution was that we filled all available tanks (fuel tanks and water tanks) with diesel fuel. We took the fresh water we would need in 5-gallon plastic water jugs that had to be lashed down in the galley and along the passageways. Huge portable fuel bladders were secured in the staterooms and filled to the max. They were like enormous water beds, only much taller. What a sight! We called those monstrosities "rubber duckies". The temporary tanks were used first, and then the empty bladders were folded up and stowed away to make room for the real cargo on the return trip. Duppy and Brad had it all figured out, and we implemented it as best we could.

When it was time, which was almost immediately, to make the third move to Columbia, Angelo got paranoid about the loading spot and the stability of the local military unit who'd been handsomely paid to provide security. There was heat from somewhere, so the plan was for us to meet up with a freighter at a remote, partially-submerged reef called Serranilla Bank in the Western Caribbean Sea. It was made up of a few small, uninhabited islets. It was also a ship's graveyard. It bore the evidence. Skeletons of several large, rusted-out and abandoned ships, which had gone aground in storms and been abandoned over the years, were visible. It was a testament to the power of the sea. It was also a great place to pull off the caper we had planned. Serranilla Bank was about 400 miles northwest of Santa Marta and 200 miles southwest of Jamaica. It was out of the sea lanes, so it was unlikely we would ever see anyone out there besides our accomplices. We wouldn't be bothered.

Apparently, there was some delay in loading the freighter down in Columbia. We had to wait for two days before they showed up at the rendezvous. But we didn't have anything else to do. While we waited, we spotted another boat anchored a short distance away. We hadn't been clued in on anything like that. It was a sleek 60-footer. We found out later, after some posturing and a feeling-out period, that they were from Miami. They were there for the same purpose that we were, to meet up with the freighter. There were only 2 guys on the boat. The captain spoke enough English to communicate all the necessary information to Duppy. Cool runnin'.

We never carried any weapons out to sea, even though accepted maritime protocol damn near required a gun on board to ward off potential pirates or any other unforeseen trouble. The Cubans were well armed. We didn't even have a slingshot.

The Colombian freighter we'd been waiting for finally showed up. When we contacted them, they conveyed to us that they were expecting a codeword from us to verify our legitimacy, that we were actually the ones who were supposed to get the goods. It would have been a good test except that we didn't know what they were talking about, much less what the password could possibly be. They gave us a hint. It was our leader's name, they said. We tried everything we could think of. Keith, Keeto, Wally, Moses, Samson, and anything else we could conjure up. But none hit the mark. Fortunately, we were in daily contact with Star Island by radio. So we were able to straighten that out. To our amazement, the word they were looking for was "Niah". Almost inconceivable. Niah was how most of us addressed Keith every day we were around him. It was a term of great reverence in his case. How could we have missed that? But we did. After everything got sorted out, we loaded up the fragrant bales onto the Our Seas. As we finished loading, the Colombians showed us another cargo hold in the bowels of their ship. Inside, stacked and piled high to the

ceiling, were thousands of neatly wrapped kilos of cocaine. That's what the Cubans had come for. And the head honcho for the Colombians told us we could take as much of it as we wanted, up front, per Angelo's instructions. That was another surprise. But to us, the offer to take the cocaine was like an insult, though the Colombians could never have detected how we felt about the notorious white powder. We felt we had the moral high ground. Cocaine was a tool of the Devil. We gratefully declined the offer, rejoicing as we departed Serranilla Bank with tons of top-grade Colombian red and gold marijuana. Cocaine be damned!

18 Johnny and the Ranch

Sometime in late 1976 or early 1977, the brothers made another move up from Jamaica. They were loaded down as much as possible with ganja. It may have been the last such movement before we temporarily started going to Columbia for our sacrament. Johnny, the Jamaican of Indian ethnicity whom Keith had befriended while he'd been locked up in the St. Catherine District Prison at Spanish Town, had somehow escaped from the harsh conditions of the overcrowded old dungeon, which had been built in 1740. He'd definitely had some inside help to pull that off. Hmmm! And his escape just happened to closely coincide with the time the brothers were set to pick up a load of ganja at our private seaside port near Alligator Pond. And, as you may suspect, Johnny was on board the Rugantino when it departed Jamaica with two types of contraband on board: herbal and human. Johnny came all the way up to Florida with the brothers. As we were offloading the herb, I remember carrying that ungrateful prick on my shoulders from the T-Craft (a mothership-to-shore boat) to the Canal shore, about 15 feet, because Johnny was absolutely terrified of the water. He wouldn't put his toe in. He was a killer on land and a wimpy little bitch at sea. I'm sure the brothers had to nursemaid that delicate doily the entire voyage. He was ultimately a coward. Yep! Once he set foot on the dry soil of the United States, Johnny received preferential treatment from the brothers and sisters. We presented him with a new I.D. (Robert F. DeMarco), a brand new, blue Jeep Cherokee and comfortable accommodations at the Ranch. And he got some cash, too. He was treated much better by us than the recent wave of illegal immigrants coming into our magnificent Nation from all over the world, which is almost inconceivable. And treated better than a lot of the brethren and sisters with whom he dwelt. That's how it was, and that's how the degenerate low-level street crook, whom we always knew as "Johnny", got to the U.S. and, ultimately, to the Ranch. He had carte blanche because that's how Keith wanted it.

We were all glad to roll out the red carpet. Johnny was soon coming and going as he pleased. From the outhouse to the penthouse overnight. Nobody paid particularly close attention to his movements. After a while, he seemed like one of the community members. He even came to prayer on occasion, which solidified his standing in our eyes. Johnny had free rein.

About that time, Brother Keith got his papers in order, with a little help from some greenbacks, and he came to the United States. Life in America was, and is, pretty damn good. Keith enjoyed a multitude of new experiences, basking in the good life his fellow Church members had carved out in Babylon. He'd also brought along a few Jamaicans for the excursion. Brother Dougie, Brother Jehu, and Rupee Edwards, the

friendly Jamaican Customs Agent. Pee, his current concubine at that time, was along for the ride as well. Keith traveled around the United States with an entourage of selected sisters and brothers, taking in the sights and sounds of the kingdom many consider to be the best place on Earth to live. The group pompously laid claim to New York City in the name of Coptic. A little presumptuous perhaps, but it all seemed befitting our mindset and our contention, "The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof". That gave us dominion. And later, they imperiously renamed the Golden State, "Cali-for-Niah". Cali is a patois reference to marijuana buds. It all sounded so good. At the time we were rockin'. Who's to argue with prosperity?

About the same time, a ganja move was imminent. Keith came up from Miami to our sanctuary in Central Florida. He wanted to scope things out, get a look firsthand at the place that had worked out so well, for so long, in facilitating our business operation in the U.S. The part that produced mountains of cash for the Church in Jamaica, like a special branch of the Bullion Depository at Fort Knox. It goes without saying, but I'll say it anyway. Keith was the overall boss of whatever happened under the Coptic banner. Cliff was, and had been for a while, calling the shots for everything of consequence we were doing on U.S. soil. He was Keith's #1 lieutenant in this country. Cliff had a couple of fake IDs because of his fugitive status after having skipped out on bail in 1972. And he had a couple of nicknames to prevent anyone from calling him by his real name in public. One of them was "Chief". Keith had dubbed him that in an incidental conversation, and it stuck. So he was the Chief for all practical purposes. He was also called the "Little One" because of his physical stature. But when we were moving the ganja, he was the Chief. So, there we were. A cast of believers anxious to participate in the engrossing subterfuge. Even though Johnny stayed at the Ranch with us, the place was big enough so that he never knew about the underground labyrinth of secret chambers. True, he'd come up to America on a boatload of weed, but he had no clue we were sitting on the subterranean stockpile. He was not privy to any of our secretive commercial enterprises. Cliff didn't even want him up there, but his hesitancy was pooh-poohed by our spiritual leader, so as to impress upon the low-life street criminal he had taken under his wing just who was really in charge. Keith insisted that Johnny had to play some role in our surreptitious activities. Even I knew at the time that was not the brightest move, but I was way too full of shit to even utter a word of protest. So it was decided that Johnny could take up the position operating the CB-radio base that we had set up on the other side of the road. We thought of that side as the "safe" side, where most of the women and children stayed when they were up there. We had an aluminum antenna mounted high up in a tall pine tree. If Johnny stayed with the radio equipment, he still wouldn't know what was going on over on the side where all the action would be taking place.

We'd unloaded most of the herb and stashed it below ground. Only one stash room remained open, and the final pile of blocks was being passed into its depths. That's when Keith told somebody to go and get Johnny and bring him over. That took the wind out of everybody who was there. But like lambs to the slaughter, no one dared utter a word, or even cough out a bleat. Actually, Cliff put up a little fuss, but Keith steamrolled over him, too. When Keith said to do something, we just did it. It was one of those emasculating moments, of which there were many along the way. So Johnny was brought over. One of the holes was still open and quite a few blocks were stacked by its opening in the barn floor when he showed up. If he hadn't figured it out already, and I feel certain he hadn't, there would be no more mystery about what was going on. Johnny knew where the stashes were and what was in them. And everybody had been reminded who the real "Chief" actually was.

Johnny watched the remaining herb disappear underground, the top door closed, and the dirt and hay put back into place over it. All the brothers and sisters who had ever set foot on the property, or if they even knew about the place, had gone through intense and thorough spiritual vetting. Everybody except Johnny, that is. And Johnny was a straight-up scumbag. That was the end of the drama for that particular evening, but not the end of Johnny. Johnny was a bad seed. The sleazy little creep wasn't satisfied with the new life we had provided for him. He'd found a girlfriend down in Dade City, Florida, which wasn't a problem. But he wanted to impress her and have a pocket full of banknotes, too. So at night, while we were either praying or sleeping (about the same thing sometimes), Johnny snuck into the barn and stole a couple blocks of herb from the stash he'd been shown at the behest of our charismatic leader. Whatever he took was never missed. Who's going to notice a few blocks gone when we had so many of them? We never kept track, because everybody who had ever come up there was completely trustworthy, otherwise they would never have gotten near the place. And who's going to miss a few pounds out of 25,000 plus? Well, none of us anyway, that's for sure. And we never would have missed it either, except Johnny and his girlfriend tried to sell some of the mediocre pot down around Dade City. Johnny was a street punk from Jamaica, and certainly he'd never done anything like that before either. So with their negligible savvy in that arena, it didn't take long for the Dade City cops to zero in on them and make a controlled buy. Naturally, they busted them both. They found 80 pounds of pressed marijuana in her apartment. Must have been 2 blocks. When the sniveling little twit felt the cuffs snap around his wrists, he couldn't wait to tell his new friends where he'd gotten the contraband. His story was so preposterous that they had immediately called in the F.D.L.E (Florida Department of Law Enforcement.) They're the big boys in the Sunshine State. That's when Agent Manny Funes entered the picture. Manny proved to be a formidable foe. Eventually, he came out the other end of the unfolding drama smelling like a rose. But it smelled much different than that to us. It smelled like a rat! But our olfactory neurons hadn't yet detected the aroma.

Legally, it's difficult to get a search warrant based on a story from a sleazeball. Manny knew the story was true, but he had to convince a judge. So he conducted a late night foray into enemy territory without a warrant. He came in and illegally searched the place, obviously sneaking up through the woods. Manny and Johnny. What a pair! When Manny saw the cache of marijuana, and sensed it was only the tip of the iceberg, his bowels must have released immediately. He went absolutely gaga. The whole thing had just fallen into his soiled lap. Armed with some real evidence, and the eyewitness account of a law enforcement officer, Manny was easily able to get a warrant. Then he organized a raiding party and, together with the Marion County Sheriff's Department, they rode down on us with a pretty good-size posse. It was November 28, 1977.

Early of a morning on the 27th of November, Brother Butch and I departed from a safe house in Massachusetts. We were driving a new Chevrolet Dually pickup. The brothers had two of them rigged up for service. It had a double cab, so we had plenty of room. It wasn't a sleeper cab, but we were comfortable. And the big cab meant that there were four doors. When we took off the easily-removable, upholstered panels, the spacious hollow doors were exposed. The doors could hold, and did hold, a decent amount of bundled cash. And it was secure when the panels were put back in place. That day, we had \$660,000 packed in the doors with room to spare. It was money from the previous trip. We were taking it back to the Ranch where we both lived at the time. We wanted to get home. The bed of the Dually had a smooth setup, too. Brad and RamRam had designed it and had it built. An ingeniously-fabricated steel tank was fitted into the space and expanded out above the bed's sides. There was a wide pipe-fixture setup fitted at the bottom to make the monstrosity appear to be a huge charcoal filter with all the accompanying hoses. Painted on each side was the company name, Faithful Filters. It could easily have been believed that the device was actually a specially-designed charcoal filter used on farm lakes and ponds to eliminate any "bogus" microorganisms, so the livestock could drink from them without concern. That would have been our cover story had we needed it. When we opened the tailgate and slid the filter tank back a couple of feet, we could remove a 30" X 30" steel plate and get inside. 2000 pounds fit nicely into the hollow belly. A load which Butch and I had just delivered the day before.

We started late, but drove the rest of the day and spent the night at a motel. Up early, we fired up the pipe, had our oblation, grabbed a cup of coffee and hit the road. We made it back to the Ranch about midday. I can't speak for Butch, but I was really horny. I suspect he was, as well. When we got there, we found out that a truck movement heading up to Iowa was set for that night. Moving the ganja was our top priority at all times. We always waited until after dark to start loading up so as to maintain some semblance of cover.

A brand new Peterbilt was parked in the big barn ready for action. Mac, a trusted confidant, was the driver. Once we loaded the bales, we'd cover the contraband cargo with a mountain of bagged cedar chips. Mac had the paperwork to deliver the wood chips to a nursery in Iowa. So we were all set.

I parked the Dually on the side of our compound where there were no buried treasures. The safe side. Butch lived on the other side, where the herb was stashed, with his exquisitely-gentle, pregnant wife, Vickie. She was always humble and acquiesced to her husband's wishes, which was part of our doctrine. I took all the money out of the Dually's doors and put most of it into a small suitcase. The overflow went into a pillowcase. I took the bags inside and stowed them in our closet. Then, I spent a little time with Judy, which was a rare pleasure in those days. Afterward, we had some family time with the kids. It got dark around 6 at that time of the year. Once the loading of the 18-wheeler got started, the job required bodies. We did everything manually. I was thinking about going over there as dusk settled in, but I really wasn't in any hurry. I was basking in the post-coital bliss of a happy man. I was chillin'.

I remember hearing someone passing the word that the brothers needed help. Then suddenly, within minutes, the vibrations quickly changed. Chaos! People shouting, lights flashing. The cops were raiding the place. A thousand thoughts raced through my mind. I felt that Judy and the kids would be alright whatever happened. Innocent bystanders. There was no marijuana stashed on that side of the road. And we were hopelessly stuck, anyway, because of the single dirt road leading away from the place. I, on the other hand, was a fugitive. If they caught me, held me, and printed me, they'd discover that little fact. And I'd be done for. And the money. I had to get the money out of there. We had no way of knowing at that moment that the cops only had a search warrant for the west side of the cul-de-sac. They hadn't, for whatever reason, connected the 2 properties, or, more likely, didn't have enough evidence to include it on the warrant. I expected them to be coming down the driveway any minute. I told Judy to just hang in there. I was going to take off into the woods with Brian and the money. Judy was always a tough and brave lady. She hung in there, like I knew she would.

I got Brian. We grabbed the money. I had the suitcase, and he took the pillowcase. We skedaddled into the scrub forest north of the property. We crawled to the fence line and hopped over it with our luggage in tow. Brian was 11 years old. We moved into the woods a little deeper, but I knew we couldn't haul the bacon along with us through the woods to the highway. I had a half-assed plan already formulated in my mind to make our escape to Ocala where we'd be able to figure something out. I'd spent plenty of time around the area, so I had a passive familiarity with the lay of the land. I knew there was a black family living on a small acreage on U.S. 40, which was the quickest route to Ocala, but that highway was still

several miles to the north. And the family I was thinking about lived another couple miles east of that. I had no idea what else to do. My best plan of action was to go to the people's house in the middle of the night, plead that we'd had car trouble and ask for help. A desperate measure, but we were stuck. I quickly grabbed a fat roll of cash from the pillowcase, and then picked out a spot to hide the dough. I tried to triangulate the spot using the method I'd learned while in the Army. Two yard lights and a pine tree. Thank God for Uncle Sam. We buried the money, covering the bags with sand and dry palmetto fronds so they couldn't be seen from the surface. Then, Brian and I snuck off deeper into the woods. Yet again, the hand of Providence intervened, out in the scrub forest, in the middle of nowhere, late at night. We heard the brush rustling nearby. It was Cliff. He was trying to get away too, but he was more confused than we were.

He'd been driving up from Miami with Brother Carl in his small Subaru. The rest of us were supposed to be loading Mac's rig for the trip north. Cliff was always a very cautious guy. He was a fugitive, too. When he'd seen the posse assembling at the entrance to the Rainbow Springs development, he'd quickly driven to the stash house and sounded the alarm. Within minutes though, the Sheriff's posse had clogged the dirt road, making escape by car impossible. Cliff ditched his car and sprinted into the woods.

Who knows? But there we were. Clifton, Brian and I stumbling around with nowhere to go. I told Cliff my tentative plan, and we moved off in that direction. We walked in silence and darkness for what seemed like an eternity. For a short stretch, I had to carry Brian on my back to give him a respite from our persistent pace. We finally made it to a spot where we could actually see the dim, far-off lights of the little wooden house. After a few minutes of indecision, Brian and I went up onto the porch and knocked on the door. Cliff stayed out by the road. It was early A.M. Somebody inside was just beginning to stir. In a minute, an older black man opened the door a crack and listened to my tale. The explanation was believable enough so that he opened the door and invited us in. Cliff, too. When his wife and 20-something-year-old son came into the room, he introduced us. Then, he told us that both he and his son had jobs in Ocala, and they would be leaving for work soon. He said we could ride into town with them. Real angels of God. A cool drink of water for a parched throat.

They gave us coffee and made some cocoa for Brian while we waited for them to get ready. When everything was all set, we packed into their small car and took off for Ocala. It was early dawn when we left. Part of the way into town, we saw a black guy standing alone by the side of the road hitchhiking in the semi-darkness. When the lights passed over him, we could see it was Mac. Somehow he'd escaped the pandemonium. "Stop!", we shouted. "We know that guy. Pick him up." Our new friends must have been a little more than surprised, but they stopped and picked him up. We rode to town in silence. No explanation

was asked for and none was given. And that's how we all ended up in Ocala the morning after the disastrous event at the Ranch. Separately, without knowing what the other one was doing, both Cliff and I slipped the good Samaritans a nice fistful of dollars. Whatever we gave them could never have been enough to compensate for the assistance they rendered to us, but when we parted ways, I feel certain that they were happy they had helped the frenzied strangers who had knocked on their door in the wee hours of a morning.

Later, when the news would get around to them concerning exactly what had taken place a few miles from their house that night, they would have many hours of reverie out on the front porch with their family, friends and neighbors recounting the events of that night. They'd unknowingly been in the thick of it. When they dropped us all off, Mac said he had some extended family and friends in the area, and he went his own way. We waited until the first car dealership opened up on the edge of town that morning, and Cliff bought a used Chevy pickup. He needed to get to Miami to help sort out the mayhem that was sure to follow.

When we called Star Island, we found out Judy, Jennifer, Dan, Cynthia and another sister had packed a few things into a Buick station wagon and driven down the long driveway, and then away from the place without any interference. The raiding party still hadn't made the connection between the two seemingly separate properties. Or they only had a warrant for the west side of the cul-de-sac. My family was holed-up at a nearby motel. Sometimes we just got lucky, but we always saw it as Divine Intervention. God was looking out for us.

There was a lot of shit going down at the same time. Cliff took me to the motel where Judy, the kids and the others were waiting to hear what to do. Then he took off for Miami. My main focus was to retrieve the money and boogie south with my family and the cash. But I needed help. Red Beard came up from Miami with Jake to give me a hand. We all knew Red Beard had extraordinary prowess in any wilderness environment. So it was he and I who would go in after the cash at night. Jake was going to be our getaway driver. I don't know if I would have been able to find the money on my own under those circumstances, but I was glad to have Red Beard by my side. He had the instincts of an owl at night. He was able to get us through the thick underbrush, in the dark, to a spot where we could see the yard lights and the shadowy pine tree. From there I was able to locate the partially buried bags, after a little scratching around. We got back to U.S. Highway 41 where Jake had been flip-flopping back and forth on the highway, awaiting our arrival. We had the goods. He picked us up. That was a relief. "Bloodclot! Let's get the hell out of here!"

I hooked up with Judy and the kids, and we took off for Miami. None of us ever went back to the Ranch again. For anything. The place eventually went on a long list of Church-associated properties that

were on the initial inventory of assets that the IRS put under a \$15.4 million tax lien, based on purchases made by known Coptic members. They claimed the Church was a front for an illegal smuggling operation, and therefore was not entitled to the tax exemption provision of their law. They had granted the Church tax-exempt status in 1976. It was revoked immediately after the raid. That was not the first time we were displaced from our home and possessions for being ganja people. And it wouldn't be the last. Unfortunately for us, those are the consequences of living outside the law.

As a direct result of the bust at the Ranch, Providence once again intervened. Brother Carl Swanson, who was deferentially known to us as "Z-man", was one of the ones arrested that night. Carl was the Secretary of the Church on the papers of incorporation in America. He was taken to the Marion County Jail in Ocala, along with all the others who'd been arrested that night. While there, he'd been locked in the same cellblock with Tony Darwin, a pilot of some renown who, rumor had it, had had some combat missions in Vietnam on his resume. Tony happened to be in the jail under suspicion of flying some marijuana into Central Florida and dropping it into a field. Tony was extraordinarily skillful and almost as fearless as the Delta Force operatives. Maybe not, but he was brave and more than a little reckless. Carl and Tony became friends immediately. They'd had a lot in common besides just their alleged involvement in illegal smuggling activities. Tony would become an integral part of the Coptic ganja business. He was the right man at the right time in the right spot. In the end, Tony Darwin was a bonafide badass.

19 Publicity, Cops Ram Front Gate

After the devastating blow at the Ranch, a lot of things changed. The media got a hold of the story. A tax-exempt Church, who openly smoked marijuana as their sacrament and lived on an exclusive private island between Miami and Miami Beach, had been involved in a multi-ton marijuana seizure in Central Florida. One day one of the local news stations sent a crew to the front gate at Star Island with a request to do a profile on Keith Gordon, a Jamaican purported to be the head of the pot-smoking church. A bunch of us were sitting around in the cottage, passing a pipe around and talking big shit. Keith was with us. Keith said it was time now to let the world know about our doctrine and our claims. So, in they came. The media frenzy began.

Our cosmic was something quite different than any of the media had ever seen or heard of before that moment. The neighbors told both the press and the police that they had observed about 30 or more members of the group participating in daily services. And clouds of smoke could be seen rising above the exclusive Island. And they could smell it, too! Certain times of the day, a continuous drone of melodies filled the air. It sounded like church music. Because it was church music. "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound." What the hell could possibly be going on at 43 Star Island? The media hype was quite sensational, with daily updates. When they saw, and then filmed, the children puffing away on gigantic spliffs (marijuana cigarettes), the story went national. They didn't know about going viral then. The IRS revoked the Church's tax-exempt status and put a lien on dozens of properties in America that they claimed were linked to the Church. They presented Tommy (Brother Louv) with the \$15.4 million tax bill. They wanted their cut, and they aimed to get it.

Pressure on the local politicians intensified. That band of unwashed miscreants was openly flaunting the law and thumbing their noses at authority. Something had to be done. The property at 43 Star Island was 1.11 acres. There were three separate houses, a pool and plenty of tropical flowers and other foliage. Miami Beach had police jurisdiction over Star Island. They organized a raiding party. It was a full on "Eliot-Ness" style assault. As gentle breezes wafted the fragrance of jasmine and magnolia over the yard, and the sounds of children playing echoed in the warm air, the Miami Beach cops came smashing through the locked, wrought-iron front gate. They had a big tow truck from a local company. A huge battering-ram device had been mounted on the front of it. Bam!! The gates came crashing open, and the driveway filled with cops. They were armed with three fugitive warrants, and that's the pretense they used to justify their outrageous behavior. One of the warrants was for Bighead Stevie. He'd skipped out on a bond in Canada.

But Stevie wasn't at the Star that day; he was in Jamaica. The second warrant was for Clifton who'd disappeared while on bond in Miami in 1972. And the third warrant was for me, because I had escaped from Federal Prison. The term "escape" always seemed quite a bit more ominous than what I'd actually done. I hadn't returned from a 24-hour pass which they had issued to me, so I was considered to be a bad boy. Escape from prison.

The drama out front was right out of a cheap C.S.I. Miami episode. Cliff and I heard the commotion and knew it was time to vamoose ... in a hurry. Fortunately for us, the Star Island property was pretty big. Big enough that we were able to make it out the back door of the main house and down the walkway to the pier. The private dock was on Government Cut, which is a gateway to the Atlantic Ocean. Brother Randy (Captain Randy, actually) had a speed boat tied to the sturdy jetty. We hit the dock running and jumped in. Randy goosed the throttle, the bow lifted up out of the water, and we roared off, bouncing over the small wakes on Biscayne Bay. We'd made our great escape for that day. We made it safely to Coconut Grove and took a cab to a small, rented house in Coral Gables. It was where Brother Sheldon and Sister Diana lived.

In the aftermath of the gate crashing, the police diligently ID'd everyone, especially all the bearded males, which was probably all the adult males. They were looking for Michael Arison, too. He was Ted Arison's adopted son. Ted was the billionaire owner of Carnival Cruise Lines. When the cops got to Brother Bobby, a Jewish brother from Philly, they made him pull up his shirt sleeve. They were looking for a small tattoo that Tranmer (me) had on his right shoulder. I'd gotten it when I was 17 during the All-Iowa Fair at Hawkeye Downs in Cedar Rapids. The artist, who'd perceptively set up his operation next to the beer tent, was a bit shady, and the staff at the beer tent wasn't too interested in anyone's age either. "Drink up, boys." But Bobby didn't have a tattoo on his arm, and their raid proved fruitless that day. They'd come up empty. Nothing at all to show for the villainous mischief they'd carried out. They'd had to leave empty-handed. And as far as I know, the G-men never made restitution for the havoc they created on the serene island that day.

Another episode with the cops and the media centered around a remote marijuana field in the Everglades. Loop Road off the Tamiami Trail out near Monroe Station. Close to where we had initially camped out in 1971. Red Beard, an ancient swamp dweller from another dimension, knew of a nearly-inaccessible hardwood hammock (highground in the morass) a few miles deep into the thick swampland. He'd found it years before during one of his many explorations of the surrounding quagmire. The hammock had been used by the Seminole Tribe at some point in their struggle, evidenced by a huge grapefruit tree flourishing in the center of it. The tree bore some of the sweetest citrus I've ever tasted. Red Beard had

named the slightly-elevated piece of rich soil “Gumbo Land” after the indigenous copper-colored gumbo limbo trees that dotted the landscape. The brothers set up camp there and started growing a little ganja, to see if it would work, out there in the alligators’ habitat. Small at first, the venture expanded quickly to a several-acre plot and yielded some very nice bud. It had a uniquely sweet taste, a lovely bouquet and, best of all, it delivered the toker to the “land of milk and honey”. The sacramental offering was simply dubbed “Gumbo” for obvious reasons. Everybody would be elated when one of the brothers from out there brought a parcel of gumbo into Star Island for consumption during the evening prayer service. The melodic crescendo of our oblation seemed to noticeably elevate with each puff on the pipe. Lance, Greg, Little Michael, and Red Beard were the chief architects of the agricultural operation. One thing led to another, and the cops got onto the fact that something was happening in the swamp. They were following 1 or 2 of the brothers for suspicious activity anyway, and just stumbled on a few longhairs disappearing into the bog. A helicopter soon hovered over the tall live oaks that provided cover. Red Beard had actually climbed those things with a chainsaw and thinned out the branches so sunlight could hit the crop. The police arrested Little Michael and Red Beard. They were the only ones home when the raid had occurred. The media got wind of it. We were just starting to get in the news as the Church that smoked marijuana as their sacrament. Walter Cronkite reported the discovery on the CBS Evening News. He described the place as being manicured like a city park. “Praise the Lord, and pass the grass”, was Walter’s final comment as he signed off that evening with a wry smile.

There were other sensational raids on Star Island that year, too. Once they found \$90,000 in cash at the small cottage closest to the gate. They just confiscated it amid all the wild media speculation. Eventually, they had to return the cash because the seizure had been illegal, but it took them a while. Those guys don't like to give up anything they've seized, and rarely do. Another time they came in with nauseous criminality in mind just to destroy a few nice ganja plants Tommy had been nursing along in his backyard garden. We always felt a sense of exhilaration whenever the cops came and had to leave unfulfilled. Eventually, as is almost always the case, the government and its forces prevailed. But that day, at the Star, when they'd unceremoniously crashed through the gates with a battering ram and found nothing, we all had a good laugh at their failed efforts. "When the wicked, even our enemies and our foes, came upon us to eat up our flesh, they stumbled and fell." That’s how we saw it. That's how we rolled.

20 Crystal River

The Ranch was gone. Just like that! A place which had been instrumental in the safe and flawless success of the whole scheme. It had been the very first base of operation that we had actually owned, and it was absolutely essential to our success. To continue, we needed a new spot to smoothly handle the flow. Cliff spotted a place close to the Canal. It would have to serve as a temporary fix for a bad situation. A new Spanish-style house had been built by an enterprising speculator at the end of a paved cul-de-sac. The entrepreneur had built three houses on the otherwise undeveloped street, and the other two were far enough away so that they were just barely visible. And those houses were vacant. So the recently finished asphalt street was essentially deserted. No other inhabitants in view. 8863 North Maple Avenue, Crystal River, Florida. Judy bought it under her maiden name, Judith Campbell. She paid cash. That, undoubtedly, was an unusual type of transaction in Citrus County, but cash is cash. She moved in almost immediately with her three children. New furniture was delivered from Ocala. Her presence with the children was a perfect cover for what we had in mind.

At that point, we really didn't know how much the cops knew about our activities at the Ranch. There was plenty of speculation about what had happened at the compound, most of which centered on a pair of disgruntled and ultimately ostracized brothers, Big Bob and Howard. But we weren't certain of anything. We simply went on with our plans to bring in another load. The pressure to continue the conduit of cash flowing south to Jamaica was immense, although none of us saw it like that. "The work" of the Church was simply to transport and market the ganja. That was taken for granted. There were no other objectives for us to fulfill in the U.S. That was it. Git that money! An entire economy depended on it. The Coptic Economy. Somehow during the mess of misinformation and ridiculous speculation, we found out who the real Judas had actually been. Johnny. That was how we viewed betrayal. Anyone who cooperated with the cops regarding the herb was justifiably saddled with the judgment of Iscariot. Eternal damnation. Through court discovery in the Marion County case, we found out it was Keith's buddy who had spilled the beans. By then we were absolutely blinded from common sense, deductive reasoning regarding our plight. All the King's horses and all the King's men couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again. But we damned sure didn't see it like that at that time. Nor is it viewed like that now, by some, actually. We were desperate and disillusioned. Johnny was appointed a pro bono attorney by the court. Somehow, Abe Rigau got the nod. Abe and his son, Roger, had a private law practice in Tampa. And coincidentally, the Rigaus had been Tony Darwin's (our infamous pilot) attorneys of choice for most of his run-ins with authorities in Florida. So

we'd had a direct connection to Judas's court proceedings through his court-appointed mouthpiece. But even that didn't help us much.

It was decided that we would continue using the Canal. Nobody wants to take credit for that decision, but it was decided, and we did it. We really didn't have much choice. When Judy got the place north of Crystal River, the plan was to bring in the load at our usual spot (down at the end of the Canal), take it over to Judy's, and move it up north from there as expediently as possible. After the disaster at the Ranch, the logistics had to be modified to accommodate our situation. Almost everything had to be re-examined and adjusted. Judy, the kids and I made the house there at Crystal River into a pleasant family situation. It was remote, but that's what we wanted. We were remote people anyway and the kids weren't in school, so it worked out nicely.

One of the vehicles we used to move the herb from the Canal to the safe location was a dual-wheel pickup pulling a long, fifth-wheel horse trailer. But that vehicle was in Miami, along with a semi-trailer load of good hay from Iowa. A mixture of timothy and alfalfa, which is great for the livestock, and it was a perfect cover for a load of ganja. I went down to South Miami and picked it up. We loaded the trailer with hay and headed north. Butch, Brian and me. The traffic bottlenecked at I-95 North. As we approached the Turnpike, it came to an abrupt halt. My air brakes were mushy, so I wasn't able to stop quickly enough. I bumped into the car in front of me. Not hard, but the impact pushed the guy's bumper in a little and dented his trunk. Nothing major, but we had to deal with it, and we were in a self-imposed hurry. After about a 2-minute negotiation on the shoulder of the Interstate, I just bought the guy's car from him for an inflated price. Cash on the barrelhead. And I let him keep the car. What the hell was I going to do with it, anyway? He was as happy as he could be. With good fortune like that, he could afford to take the day off. Butch was a little pissed off at me. He was sure I was full of fuckery. And he was right. I was. But we moved on.

When we got to Judy's place, we unloaded most of the hay into the backyard. The 1-acre plus plot was completely fenced in with a six-foot tall, custom-made, cypress privacy fence to block off the view from any curious eyes. The first move we made there was smaller than usual, to check our strategy. We took it to Judy's and were able to load all of it into Mac's new Peterbilt rig. Real fast and real smooth. The next move was around 15 tons. Brad, Duppy and the crew delivered it without a hitch, which was always the case. There was never any heat generated by the naval operations. But the size of the load was a lot more than Mac could hold. So after he filled up, the remainder stayed behind, packed up to the ceiling in two of the bedrooms at Judy's. About a week later, Mac showed up again and took another load north, but that still left about 4000 pounds jammed into the smallest of Judy's three bedrooms. The smell was musty

and strong. There was really no adequate ventilation, and no deodorizer in the world could have neutralised the scent of that much funky weed. That set the stage for the unfolding of the next episode of our melodramatic Greek tragedy. Except it wasn't 150 B.C., nor was it Greece. We were in the late 1970s in the U.S.A. "You ain't gittin' by with that shit around here, boy!" And they were right. We just didn't know it yet.

February, 1978. A 19-ton load of Jamaican ganja was heading our way. We made preparations, but the 4000 pounds was still in the bedroom. We were moving too fast for our own good. We'd be able to leave some of the new herb behind at Judy's, but most of it was going to have to move off the same night we unloaded it. Mac went up to Iowa in his Peterbilt, a horse-trailer full went up to Massachusetts, and another bus load to South Florida. That was our plan. And then we'd just have to hope for the best.

Brad, who obviously felt the heat generated by what Johnny had done, sensed we'd need a new place to bring in the herb. So he set up a viable alternative to the Canal, just in case we would ever need it. He bought a place on Alligator Point, which is about 150 miles north of the Canal. It was conveniently located with frontage on the Gulf of Mexico. He also purchased more than 90 acres of land over near Lloyd, Florida. Then he made the necessary preparations to conceal a large portion of marijuana underground. The place hadn't been used because our other arrangements at the Canal had always proven to be tried and true. The quantity we could bring in there was almost unlimited. Still, if we had needed the other places, they were ready. Later, after the feces had hit the fan, we found out that the authorities had been surveilling around the Canal area for a while, ever since the hullabaloo at the Ranch. No big surprise, but we were collectively blinded by greed and delusional madness. The desire and need for money overrode the obvious.

All that set the stage for the next dramatic chapter. We were set up at the end of the 7-mile long, rutted dirt road alongside the Canal which led to the open water. We had a big school bus with the windows blacked out and lettering identifying it as a church bus. We had a Wanderlodge motorhome with curtained windows. At the time, that was a very upscale way to travel. We had the fifth-wheel horse trailer and several smaller satellite vehicles. And there were a lot of brothers and sisters who would make it all happen. Brother Keith was in America, too. Several Jamaicans (Norman, Mr. Johnson, Wild Bill and Reginald Toney, the Guyanese fishing boat captain) all accompanied him. Those guys had proven their mettle under "fire", a term we used to describe many of our activities. "Tested in the fire!" There were at least four sisters and damn near two dozen white brothers to round out the cast. We all had roles and responsibilities. It was a big operation. Cliff was out front guarding the highway entrance to the campground by driving back and forth on U.S. 98. (Highways U.S.19 and U.S. 98 meet in Perry, Florida and run down the west coast of that

State together.) Just inside the campground entrance road, sort of under the big bridge, Brother Carl was posted up in a van with Sister Anne, the gracious and courageous wife of RamRam. Carl was an attorney. He'd passed the bar exam at Drake University in Des Moines. He was a pilot and an international emissary, acting as Secretary of the Ethiopian Zion Coptic Church. And just recently, he'd been busted at the Ranch with more than 13 tons of the dirty old ganja weed. He was the most significant defendant in that case because he was an officer of the Church. Well, he was on watch that night at the Canal. Part of his assignment (because we'd talked about it, so that's how I know) was for him and Anne to interfere with anyone coming down that road, even if it meant to ram whoever it may be, if necessary. Who the hell would volunteer for a job like that? I call it devotion, because that's how it felt. Our collective eye was single. Bring in that ganja!

Judy, Jennifer and Dan were holding down the fort at North Maple Avenue, where we had a CB radio base set up. The antenna was mounted high up in a massive Live Oak. The rest of us (more than 20 bodies, including 12-year-old Brian) were in place and ready at the end of the furrowed dirt road. We awaited the arrival of our navy. When the sisters got in line to pass the blocks, they had to keep up with the pace. And they'd had to wear skirts to the ground, which was mandatory garb for the ladies at that time. And head coverings. Their presence would be equivalent to women competing in the NFL and making those big guys look like twits. But the valiant damsels did it. We were all connected with CB radios. We had a call sign to authenticate all of our communications, even though we all knew each other's voices quite well. Our call sign was "K.O.K." King of Kings, to whom these praises we sing.

Clifton first sounded a cautionary alarm. He thought some of the traffic along U.S. Highway 98 looked suspicious. That put everyone on high alert. And we had never felt a cosmic like that in all of our previous moves at the Canal. Never! We actually had the other place, up at Alligator Point, thanks to Brad. It would have been difficult to shift gears at such a late stage of the operation, but the prospect was discussed. The situation may just have been that emergency for which it had been prepared. There was much tension. At that point, Brother Tommy, who was Niah's (Keith's) radio man that night, passed along the warning to Keith. It was a critical moment in the whole spectacle. Nothing had actually happened up to that point. Then, it all happened in just a few minutes of time. Keith made the decision to bring it in. He told Tommy. Tommy passed along the order over the CB for all to hear. Many of us were close enough to hear the raw command without the radio. "The King of Kings says, 'Bring it in' ". That's all we needed to hear. Everybody knew who had given the order. The King of Kings, of course! "Bring it in." So that's what we did.

A Bayliner and a T-Craft jumped into action and headed for the "Our Seas", which was hauling the motherload. Brian and I were in line near the school bus passing bales from Harry to Chuck, who was inside the bus. The small boats came and went as we struggled to keep up. We worked steadily for over an hour, maybe two. Most of the load was ashore. That's when we heard the death knell. Almost simultaneously, Cliff and Carl could be heard loud and clear in very animated tones. "The 'lice are coming!!!" Po-lice. That's what we called the cops. They were streaming from the highway into the seldom-used, dirt-road entrance leading to our secret place. It was no longer secret. Total chaos ensued. The worst possible scenario. Then, within minutes, we heard the marine patrol contingent of the raiding party sounding their warning over a very loud and very clear bullhorn. "Police! Police! Don't move! Stay where you are!" Pandemonium. Then a couple of gunshots rang out above the maelstrom of mayhem. We could actually see the flashes. It looked like they were firing above our heads, but it was time to leave, no matter where they were aiming. They were close.

Brian and I boogied. We quickly made our way to the top of the overgrown berm, which had been formed when the Corps of Engineers carved out the 150-foot wide X 12-foot deep waterway. It was a tall berm. The flora was thick and flourishing after more than 15 years of unabated growth. It gave us good cover. The commotion down by the water was enough of a distraction for the undermanned cops, which was the Marine Patrol. We easily got away, but away to where? Navigating the uneven dirt road that ran alongside the canal was a slow and bumpy trek. It took the police who were coming at us from the highway a while to cover the distance. Everyone had scattered. There was confusion and uncertainty. We could see the lights of the cars bumping along below us, heading in the opposite direction. They were moving toward the action, and we were trying to get someplace. Anywhere away from the action.

It was slow going. The underbrush was thick. There was no real threat that we'd be seen. But there was really no place for us to go either. Except Judy's place. If we could, we had to get to Judy's and sort it out from there. I knew it was about seven miles to the highway and at least another couple of miles to the house. Moving through the thick underbrush at night, with no light to see where we were going, was a slow, uneasy odyssey. It took us, realistically, more than two hours to traverse those few miles.

Finally, we were getting close to the highway. We could occasionally see the lights from a single vehicle moving toward the scene of the crime, but none of the lights were heading away from the place. At least that was in our favor. When we got to where we could see the highway, the very first aura of dawn was appearing in the sky. The headlight from an occasional car or truck whisked by. The first hint of light graced the horizon. We got up close to the 4-lane artery and paused to pick the right time for our crossing.

We had to get to the other side if there was any hope to escape the chaos. When I saw what I thought was our opportunity, we made a move out of the cover into the open. But the cops had apparently anticipated such a ploy. An unmarked car had been parked in the recessed median, making it impossible for us to see it in the semi-darkness. As soon as we got to the shoulder of the highway, it became real clear, real fast, that they were ready for us. When the initial bust had occurred at the offloading spot, everyone had scattered. So the local police were trying to round up all the surprised offenders. The headlights of the police car went on, and the flashing blue and red lights added emphasis to the spectacle. They gunned the engine and came up out of the median with menacing ferocity. We broke back into the shrubbery, but they were on us almost immediately. They drove the cop car to the edge of the overgrowth, so that their headlamps shone some light on the situation. The doors flew open and they were abruptly out of the car, shining flashlights into the brush where we'd disappeared. They were close. I managed to roll into a slight depression and cover myself with a bunch of dry palmetto fronds and some leaves. But they caught up with Brian less than 15 yards from where I was hiding.

"Who are you?" It was a child. "Who's with you? We saw somebody else with you! Who is it? Where is he?" they shouted. One of the cops actually jacked a round into the chamber of his menacing firearm, trying to intimidate the youngster and frighten him into coughing up the beans. But that strategy didn't work at all. Brian had given a single response to each of their inquiries. And that response was simply, "Brian." "Who are you?" His answer, "Brian." "What's your last name?" "Brian." So they were talking to Brian Brian. "Who's with you?" Answer, "Brian." Where do you live?" Answer, "Brian," again. After a few minutes of that nonsensical exchange, they must have realized they were getting nowhere with the kid. They put Brian in the back of their car and drove off. They knew there was another person hiding in the bush, but whoever it was had no place to go anyway. I'm sure they figured they would eventually apprehend the culprit once the light of day shined down on the whole state of affairs. And they had their hands full already. Brother David was cuffed up on the rear seat of the squad car.

When they were out of sight, I crawled out of my foxhole and started moving slowly southward alongside U.S. Highway 98. I stayed in the cover of the underbrush. Unexpectedly, I came across the answer to my prayers. It was a path to the other side of the highway. A huge circular culvert ran beneath the two southbound lanes and then extended straight through under the two northbound lanes, ending up on the other side. Thank God! It was big enough so that I could just crouch over slightly at the waist and run right through. It was full daylight when I made my way through the convenient tunnel unseen. Adrenaline carried me the rest of the way to Judy's place, an oasis in the desert. Judy'd heard the beginning of the turmoil over

the CB radio, so she knew something horrible had happened. She just wasn't exactly sure what. She found out quickly from me.

There were still 4000 pounds in the bedroom. The cops had Brian, and there was no clear resolution to that. And on top of everything else, we'd have to deal with whatever was going on less than 10 miles away at the Canal. We had to figure out something before Judy could go to the authorities and retrieve our son. He was, obviously, connected with the fiasco of the previous night. We'd have to get the ganja out of the house. It was still early morning, and I was a mess. After crawling and stumbling through the woods for hours, I was pooped out. I showered, ate something, and then took a nap for several hours. It was afternoon when I woke up. I got in my pickup and headed for Miami.

When I got there, confusion reigned, as you may suspect. I was able to go out to the farm on 197th Avenue and get a shiny new aluminum-colored step van. Red Beard had it stashed out there for just such an emergency. I got the keys and hit the Turnpike going north. There was no time for rest. I drove straight through. When I got back to North Maple Avenue, a few things had happened in the interim. First of all, Judy was no longer alone with our kids and the ganja. Sister Chris, who'd been all the way down at the end of the Canal where we'd been unloading, escaped the commotion by herself. David had sacrificed himself to the cops so that she could get away. She'd made it through the woods and back to the house without really ever having been around the area before that day. It takes more than just luck mixed with a dose of prowess to negotiate those obstacles, but there she was. Again, it looked like God was assisting us. And Judy quickly let me know that after I'd left for Miami, and before Sister Chris had shown up, Wild Bill Blackledge had made it back to the house with a harrowing tale of his own. When the cops had made their presence known with the bullhorn commands and the gunshots, Bill jumped into the Canal and swam across to the north side. Then he'd walked, undetected, east until he was able to go under the big bridge to the other side of Highway 98. And then finally, he swam back across the Canal and walked the rest of the way to Judy's. Bill had never been to the place before then either. After quickly telling her about his vanishing act, he got into his car and drove back to Fort Lauderdale where he lived. He'd have to cover his ass before the dust settled, too. Houdini! Bill was gone when I got back there. I took a short nap before we loaded the herb into the step van and covered it with some of the bales of hay we had stacked up in the yard.

Judy made us some sandwiches, while I rolled up a few spliffs. When all was copacetic, we said the Traveler's Psalm, Psalm 121, in unison. "We lift up our eyes unto the hills from whence cometh our help." Then Sister Chris and I headed off toward Miami with our load of contraband.

21 Florida Turnpike

A couple of days after the great fiasco at the Canal, the police had rounded up most of the brothers, but only one sister. Sister Chris had gotten away by herself after David gave himself up to distract the search party; Sister Cordelia had escaped through the woods with Mr. Johnson; and Judy was still at the house. Anne was the only sister that got arrested that night because she'd been in the most vulnerable spot with Carl under the bridge. The brothers who'd been arrested had all been hauled into the Citrus County Jail in Inverness, the county seat. Anne had been taken down to Brooksville because their jail had better accommodation for women. After Sister Chris and I had taken off for Miami, Judy and Jennifer had to shampoo the carpet and repaint the room where the ganja had been stored. That had taken a couple more days to complete. But the funky smell of the vacated marijuana still lingered.

The fastest and most direct route to Miami was to go right through Inverness where all the brothers were languishing in the local clink. While they were there, they were having oblations several times a day and chanting spiritual hymns into the night. By the 4th day after the debacle, the police stopped arresting the hirsute outsiders. They'd had enough from the defiant zealots that were already locked up. We never could have imagined such a course of events. No more arrests! Four of the brothers who'd been stumbling through the woods for what seemed like an eternity, hoping for an escape route to Judy's, trudged out of the woods exhausted. They were ready to accept the consequences after their miserable ordeal. But there were no ramifications that day, even though the group of longhairs had to have been connected to the enormous marijuana seizure that had occurred just a few miles away. Norman, Alan, Greg and Harry. The cops stopped them on the highway into town and impatiently questioned them. Then they released them. Apparently the brethren they already had locked up were quite enough for them. Those brothers were totally amazed by the outcome, but they were also certain the Spirit had intervened and put it in the cops' hearts to do His will, which was to let them go. No one could have figured on that.

Sister Chris and I drove the 4000-pound load of hay and other valuable vegetable matter through town, within sight of the County Jail where the brothers were reciting Psalms and chanting (probably off-key) day and night. Brother Keith had been arrested too, and that gave everyone a little more impetus to resist. We turned east after we passed the jail, driving over to Wildwood and then on to the Florida Turnpike. We had just passed the Service Plaza south of Kissimmee when we heard the ominous flapping sound of a flat tire. Fortunately for us, the step van had split rims on the rear axle, so we weren't totally incapacitated. We pulled over onto the wide grassy shoulder and waited for help. That's how we had to do it in 1978.

It didn't take long for help to arrive. A Florida Highway Patrol car pulled up behind us. The officer walked up to my window sporting a distinctive Stratton-style hat and asked, "What's wrong?" We explained our dilemma and laid out our cover story, hoping it passed his acid test. We had a load of the very best Timothy and alfalfa hay, which we were delivering to a stable in Homestead. He asked to look in the back of the stepvan. With some trepidation, I swung open the doors, praying our enshrouded cargo passed his scrutiny. It did. After a short conversation, he drove Chris back to the Service Plaza for help. He assisted her in getting a tow truck and the correct size tire. She showed up back at the silver step van with two mechanics and the tire. They completed their task in a short time, and we were back on the road again. We lit up two fat spliffs and began recounting the details of our oh-so-smooth episode with the tall, gallant officer of the law. We were in high spirits even after all the calamity.

Then to our shock and amazement, an FHP cruiser traveling in the opposite direction, suddenly drove down into the median with his red and blue lights flashing, and made an emergency U-turn, coming up onto the road behind us as we passed by him. Bumbahole! Was it possible that our helpful friend had become suspicious? What the hell was going on? But as we snuffed out our spliffs, lit up a cigar to mask the smell of the "burning bush" and slowed down to pull over, the sleek patrol car raced past us with his siren wailing and his lights still flashing. What a relief! He was after somebody else. By the time he pulled the violator over to the side of the road, we were approaching him. At the very moment he stepped out of his vehicle and was placing the distinctive FHP headcovering onto his head, we passed by him. Both Chris and I were hysterically waving to him. We could see his almost instant recognition. Then he majestically tipped his stately Stratton hat to us, unwittingly acknowledging the regal passage of the "plant of renown". There was no doubt in our minds. We couldn't have been more delighted. It was obviously Divine Intervention again. For sure! We were positive it was no ordinary, garden-variety Guardian Angel who had interceded in our moment of distress. No. It was the Big Boy, himself, guiding and watching over us.

Later that day, we delivered our precious cargo to the Redlands stash house. I had to get back up to Crystal River. Chris had her hands full too. David had been arrested. In fact, he'd been in the backseat of the squad car that had arrested Brian. They took Brian to a foster home and David to jail. It was a mess. Several people had gotten away, and at least four had been stopped and subsequently released. It was clear that the local law enforcement had their fill of crazed, unkempt, belligerent hooligans.

By then, Judy had her house in order. At least enough so that she was ready to go to the authorities and claim Brian. Billy hooked us up with a friend of his who was an attorney. "Rasta Jack". Jack was a

good dude. Eventually, the Court allowed Judy to take custody of Brian, but not before the sheriff and his boys had a chance to check the place where he would be staying. Judy's stinky house. During the interim since the arrest, Brian had stayed at a local foster home for almost a week. The family he stayed with had two daughters near his age. He remembers that they all treated him with admirable graciousness and hospitality. Fine Americans. Real Christians. They were actually getting ready to enroll Brian in school when his mom and Rasta Jack showed up to pick him up. Everyone knew Judy's pre-teen son had to have been connected to the biggest marijuana bust ever, to that date, in those parts. And his mother had paid cash for her house only a few months before that. Duh!

There was still a lingering musky aroma hanging in the house when they did a walk-through, but the smell couldn't be used as evidence in court, so Brian came home to the unpleasant tang. He was used to it, and he was home. The police had violated their own rules of protocol by putting an adolescent (Brian) in the same proximity with a suspected felon (David). That gave Jack a little leverage in the negotiations. So that problem was solved.

By then, the judge had set bail for the brothers. I don't remember the exact amount for each of them, but Brother Keith's bail was set at a ridiculously cool sum of \$500,000. Half a million! That was a lot of money in 1978. They knew he was the big fish, and that there was a distinct possibility he would bail on the bail. The money would be a nice addition to someone's bank account. Brother Alan (a.k.a. "Apple"), was one of the four brothers who had been released after cursory questioning on that 4th day after the commotion, when he had obviously been in the middle of all the shit, and me, who was still wanted by the FBI for escape from Federal Prison, took a canvas bag full of the exact amount of the bail, in cash, to the County courthouse. Alan actually took the musty-smelling bundles of U.S. dollars up to the public window where the bails were posted. It took the flabbergasted clerks, who had commented on the earthy aroma (from being buried underground for months), more than a few minutes to count that much loot. I waited in the car (a new Oldsmobile 98, the best we could manage under the circumstances for such a dignitary as Keith) until he was released from his first and only run-in with the law on U.S. soil.

We went over to Judy's where Apple picked up another car and drove Keith back down to Miami. Our recalcitrant leader wouldn't be long for the "Land of Liberty".

22 Carrabelle

The entire functioning apparatus of the operation that had long serviced us in our smuggling efforts and expectations was kaput. First, our stash-hideout-sanctuary at the Ranch. Shortly after that, our perfect offloading spot at the Cross-Florida Barge Canal suffered its fatal knockout. Judy's house, which was only a temporary stopgap anyway, went down the toilet too. Vehicles were captured and impounded. The "Our Seas" was confiscated. Worst of all, the real lifeblood of our idealistic schemes, the sisters and the brothers, had suffered a catastrophic derailment. Carl Swanson had been arrested. Again! That made twice in about a 3-month period. He was the Secretary and a Director of the Church in America. Keith had gotten nabbed, too, wandering along Highway 98 with Brother Randy a day or so after the calamity. And Keith was already getting national press as the leader of the Ethiopian Zion Coptic Church. Which he was. More than a dozen other faithful followers of the doctrine had willingly bitten the bullet for their fervent beliefs. Not counting the four who'd been released. It would be impossible to replace a lineup like that. To be a part of our unique circle required a unique commitment, which had solidified more and more as time passed. On a certain level of consciousness, we were absolutely nuts! All of us! And just as committed. I don't speak for anyone but myself when I say that I'm certain none of the brothers and sisters at the Canal that night were thinking about how much "Caesar" (money) would be going into their personal coffers. Because there weren't any personal coffers. Yet! Something else held us together and gave us the perseverance to do that work. Je ne sais quoi.

We were without a vessel and all the other necessary equipment and facilities to accommodate the cargo that had built and fueled our existence at that level. Brad had enough prescient insight to have secured the places at Alligator Point and Lloyd. If we wanted to continue, which really wasn't a question, we'd have to use those places. The house at Alligator Point was right on the waterfront. When the tide was out at certain times of the year, muddy flats appeared. The smell of the sea was thick in the air. It wouldn't take too much water, though, for us to bring the herb in from the motherlode using flat-bottom, aluminum jon boats when the tide was up. But there were other houses lining the coastline between the blacktop road and the water. The houses on either side of ours were seasonal dwellings, mostly summertime. It was a risky proposition to bring in the ganja there, but we were desperate to keep the money flowing south. We had to take some risks, but really, we'd been taking risks of various degrees every day for years. Risk? Forget about it!

The first move we made after the debacle at the Canal was pulled off right there without any problems. It wasn't nearly the quantity we were used to, nor the quantity we needed, but it was something. At the same time, we were able to test the serviceability of the place. It worked. We moved the herb from the boat to the house, and then small amounts from there to the farm at Lloyd. Brad had it set up nicely. He hadn't had much help doing it either. It only took a few of us to pull it off. The steel underground rooms and fiberglass septic tanks were already in place. That was our M.O. They were camouflaged under large, primitive-looking chicken coops. The place had the look of a good-old-boy fowl farm. Over 90 acres of slightly-contoured, partially-cleared farmland. It was both isolated and secure. We made a second slightly larger move at that provisional port of entry, but quickly realized we were flirting with another disaster. And the amounts we were able to bring in there were not large enough to satisfy the voracious financial expectations of the bottomless money pit. Not even close!

Brad had been ever-vigilant in his search for a place that could better satisfy those expectations. That's when the place we always referred to as "Carrabelle" entered the picture. It wasn't actually in Carrabelle, but about 5 miles east of the small coastal town, across the highway from the unincorporated community of Lanark Village. There was a spacious doublewide elevated high above ground level on stilts cut from thick telephone poles. A 40-foot long wooden pier extended out into the water. The closest neighbor was to the east on the other side of several heavily wooded lots. The place was totally secure. A perfect spot for our designs. Judy and the kids moved in immediately. It was both comfortable and comforting at a very tumultuous time. The place was very peaceful before we started using it for what it was intended: A port of entry.

That first move we made at the new setting went down without a hitch. The load was big enough to temporarily satisfy the insatiable appetite of the retail outlets up north, and some extra to build up a little stockpile of our only bankable commodity, the ganja, which was underground at the Lloyd property. It almost felt like recovery was more than just a pipe dream. Judy was totally cool with the setup. After the forbidden fruit had moved off to Lloyd, her new home was a very serene respite from the otherwise tumultuous ride. Things were looking up. At the same time, Brother Carl and his newfound friend, Tony Darwin, had created a new wing of the Coptic enterprises. The Air Force. They had started out small. The first plane was a single-engine Cessna Skyhawk. Initially, they used it to fly reconnaissance for the boat as we squeezed past Cuba through the Yucatan Channel. That was a bottleneck where any potential Coast Guard interference may occur. I remember once when the aviators flew over us wagging their wings to signal a clear passage through the Straits. It felt very secure having the luxury of an aerial escort at that critical narrowing. I don't think that plane ever actually moved any herb.

The initial airstrip they'd constructed in the foothills of the Blue Mountains had been too short. Not by much, but enough to portend disaster. The Skyhawk barely tipped off the end of it, onto the edge of a rocky abyss, one dark night as Tony and Carl had attempted to land. I think the Jamaican brothers simply bulldozed the wreckage of the plane under a pile of stony debris, never to be seen again. Brother Alan Meyerson (Apple) gives a reasonable account of the events that happened that night in his series of podcast interviews, "I'll always be your brother". Alan is a very reticent kind of a guy, so be thankful for what you get.

The air wing grew rapidly as we worked to get the boat movement back on course. The best planes we ever had were Cessna 404 Titan Ambassadors. Those sleek turbo-props could handle 2000 pounds without much strain. We could complete the entire process in one day. Take off from an Executive Airport in Florida, fly to Jamaica and pick up the merchandise, then back to our clandestine airstrip in South Florida, and finally, return to the same Executive field from whence they had begun the mission. Compare that to long, arduous sea voyages, with all the necessary logistics and the numerous bodies required to facilitate it. The volume of herb was limited with the plane, but the opportunity to fly our sacrament into this country was a new look. And it was far less stressful for far fewer people. Billy had connections to sell the load quickly, right there in Miami, so we wouldn't have to move it up north to the markets we had established in various places. That all made our aviation efforts very enticing. Smooth sailin'. Even though we'd make two or three flights a week, the quantity wasn't enough. It was never enough.

We had a big load coming in. We had always tried to foresee any eventualities and make the necessary adjustments to ward off possible drama. Brad had three functional jon boats in position to handle the offloading. Each boat was powered by a 75-horsepower Mercury short-stem for the shallow water. Judy, the kids and I were living there at the place in Carrabelle. It was isolated and quiet. But as the hour of action approached, the activity at the house increased. The muscle necessary to pull off the caper was assembling. Both at Lloyd and at the water's edge. Judy and Jennifer were the only sisters present that evening. We'd already pulled off one movement at the place, which gave us some valuable experience, but the approaching load was much bigger than the first one had been. We would need multiple trips with the jon boats to bring the cargo ashore. That step of the operation was facilitated by a dirt and gravel ramp the previous owner had formed up on the east side of the wooden pier. When the tide was up, as it had to be for our strategy to work smoothly, we would just run the loaded jon boats aground right there, and quickly unload the blocks without having to pass them along the pier. Ingenious! And we had a fifth-wheel horse trailer and two big

buses parked under the stilted doublewide. They would absorb the volume and move it over to Lloyd. We had our work cut out for us.

Butch was the pilot of one of the jon boats. RamRam was at the helm of the second, and I had the third one. RamRam was coming in from the big boat with a load of bales as I was going out empty. We didn't use any lights, for obvious reasons. We navigated by sight in the dark of the night. Almost no ambient light. I was moving along slowly, trying to keep focus on the dim horizon where the motherlode was anchored just inside Dog Island. Out of nowhere, one of the jon boats crashed across the bow of my empty skiff at top speed. It was haulin' ass. By whatever miracle, neither boat was disabled, no one harmed. He kept going and I kept going. I didn't know it at the instant of impact, but learned later that it was RamRam who crossed my path unannounced. I didn't exactly announce myself either. In fact, he had later capsized one of his loads near shore sometime during the offloading process, spilling a bunch of bales into the water. He'd managed, alone, to right the boat and retrieve most of the rectangular packages, but not all of them. He got some help, and they searched back and forth along the shore for any that may have still been floating. They got what they could find, but couldn't be sure that they had located all the errant bales. And they hadn't. We finished unloading. Duppy and his crew motored south. And the herb moved off to Lloyd.

But there was still an ominous foreboding over the place as I drove off with the last of the bales shortly before dawn. We knew that at the first trace of morning light whatever may have been left behind in the water would be visible for anyone to see. How long would it take before the heat swarmed the area? The backyard was a mess all the way down to the pier. A lot of traffic had passed over the grassy lawn. Judy and her crew (Jennifer, Dan, Billy and Brian) got to work immediately to erase the telltale clutter and disarray. Pieces of plastic wrapper, noticeable traces of marijuana from torn packages, and the ravages of beaucoup foot traffic that had left an obvious imprint. They'd had to rake the area as best they could, but weren't sure how it would look to others. They found out sometime early that same afternoon. A small party of uniformed and plainclothes cops, led by the Franklin County Sheriff's Department, trudged along the shore and through the yard looking for something suspicious. We learned later that someone had actually found a few of the lost square-fish floating close to shore and notified the sheriff. His boys were out looking for more. Judy, the kids and Billy watched out the curtained window as the procession of law enforcement personnel walked right over the scene of all the action, literally hours before. I know they were praying fervently as the group seemed to stumble along the shoreline without suspecting anything untoward may have happened there. The Psalms helped pull an iffy situation out of the flames. No doubt. But it was a close call. Too close.

23 Carl

After the disastrous losses at the Canal, and considering our limited prospects for continuing at the same level by sea, our focus turned to the sky. Carl and Tony. They purchased a Cessna 404 Titan Ambassador II and went to work. Tony was licensed to fly commercial airliners, to land on water, fly a glider and pilot a helicopter. And he could leap tall buildings in a single bound. Not all at once, but he could fly 'em all and land 'em all. We started off without an airstrip of our own. So we had to make several moves at various clandestine strips. A couple came in at a spread up near Yeehaw Junction. We did one here and another one there. It was difficult to operate consistently without our own things, though. There was always some tension on the ground. We had to adapt to a completely new way of doing business, and we were at the mercy of whoever's facility we happened to be using ... at a premium cost. Red Beard came to the rescue at the critical time. He masterminded the construction of a marl-surfaced airstrip in the middle of nowhere: The Florida Everglades.

At that time Alligator Alley was not the sleek, I-75 Everglades Parkway corridor it is today. Then it was U.S. Highway 84, a 2-lane swathe of blacktop through the uninhabitable swamps of South Florida, from Ft. Lauderdale to Naples. Just east of the Big Cypress Reservation, The Army Corps of Engineers had carved out a series of canals and levees designed to regulate the level and flow of water and better control the massive flooding in the Glades. Again, we benefited from the Corps. But there has always been a controversy about the effectiveness of that project. Environmentalists hate it. So it goes. One of the canals was very near the Reservation, running beside a canal. On the canal's west side was a narrow dirt road. Like at the Cross-Florida Barge Canal, it had been formed from the dredgings. It wasn't much of a road, cratered, rutted and dotted as it was with deep potholes that stayed full of water from the steady rains. Red Beard bought some land out there. He then worked long hours with a crew of skillful, tight-lipped Cubans. They had all the equipment necessary. With Red Beard's guidance, the Cubans laid down a smooth, 2000-foot runway about five miles north of Alligator Alley that exactly met Red Beard's specifications. It was a work of art. The remote location and masterful construction gave the place a sense of security and permanence. They put up a little house too. Several plane loads came in there without a hitch. A ton at a time was a decent payload, and if we did it often enough, those forays could keep the books balanced until the naval operation could get their feet back in the water.

September 29, 1979. I met Carl at Tony's walled-in compound in Fort Lauderdale. Each of us had a load of special order supplies bound for Jamaica. We loaded up my extended Dodge cargo van with all that

stuff in the privacy of Tony's garage, where he stored 7 exotic makes and models of automobiles. All the cars were white in color. The collection was an eccentric hobby for him. From the well-appointed garage, we could look out through the panoramic sliding glass doors and see his swimming pool. The bottom of the pool was an inlaid mosaic depiction of the Titan Ambassador in flight. Tony didn't mind flaunting his prosperity.

By that time in our little saga, Carl was wrung out. We'd been keeping up a furious pace at the racetrack of smuggling out in the swamp. He was trying to balance and maintain the immense demands of his multifaceted life. He was a husband to Sister Jayne, his virtuous and charming young wife. He was the father of two small children, and Jayne was expecting their third. His parents were living in an upscale home in Fort Lauderdale, retired and delighted to be near their son and his family. And he had all the responsibilities of his unique position in the Church. He'd done a lot of the legwork required to resurrect the Black Star Line (Marcus Garvey's footprint), a shipping line licensed in Panama because of their friendly registration policies. And all that still didn't take into account his predicament with the law at both the Ranch and the Canal. He was totally immersed in the work, all under The Sword of Damocles.

Tony showed up and we went over the plan. Tony and his girlfriend, Elena, drove off to the Executive Airport in Ft. Lauderdale. That's where they'd pick up the Titan and fly to the Executive Airport in Tampa. We planned to meet them there the following morning. It was evening before we left. Carl drove several hours across Florida. It was late when we got into Tampa, and even later by the time we got checked into a motel. We didn't get much sleep, but I'd had a chance to doze off on the long drive over. Carl hadn't. We got up early to meet Tony and Elena for breakfast. (I should really call her "Hazel", because the former pole dancer turned out to be a real witch). After a long breakfast (we were gauging the time, so it coincided with their departure), we all drove to the airport. We parked alongside the plane and transferred the passenger seats from the plane to my van and stacked all the gifts for Jamaica in the belly of the twin-engine piston aircraft for transport. That's where I left them. Hazel drove off someplace. Carl and Tony set a course for the island paradise. I drove back east to our clandestine airstrip in the swamp. Later that night, we heard from Jamaica over the shortwave radio that the aviators had picked up the load without incident and were on their way up to us. We had an approximate time for their arrival, so when the hour approached, we were getting anxious to hear from them. Brother Greg and Brother Lance, Brad, Red Beard, Clifton and me. Time passed like pouring molasses on a cold day. Minutes crept by. Our ears were tuned for the crackle of the radio. Nothing.

Then we heard it. "Mayday! Mayday!" That's all we heard. Tony's voice was sounding the universal distress signal. And then it was like the radio went dead. We tried to figure out what it meant, imagining all kinds of crap. But we didn't know. Finally, after an eternity, we decided to go out looking for something. For what? Well, something. We didn't know. We quickly unloaded the seats from my van and hid them under a big pile of brush, the result of clearing the land. Red Beard and I drove off slowly into the darkness. We had no idea what we were looking for, but we sensed it wasn't good. I drove along using only the parking lights occasionally to line up the muddy road leading back to the highway. It had been over an hour, closer to 2 hours, since we'd heard the "Mayday!" alarm. We were more than halfway back to Alligator Alley when a shadowy figure jumped out of the bushes a few feet from us. It was Tony. He was shouting in a very excited, muffled tone, "We hit a 'tar'! We hit a 'tar'!" And then he lowered the boom. "Carl's dead!" It took a minute to actually process what he was saying. What had sounded to me like "tar" was actually "tower". He was saying, "We hit a tower!" It had been his South Georgia accent. We could understand that they'd hit a tower. But the "Carl's dead!" utterance was inconceivable. First of all, we (meaning the white brothers and sisters) held an unspoken and unrealistic sense of immortality. Huh?! Yes, we did. We had fleeting fantasies that we were somehow going to live forever. It's almost impossible to comprehend something so preposterous, and many of the old characters would likely deny that small fact, but that's how we carried it.

Carl was one of the nicest, most diplomatic and least judgmental of all the brothers. A genuinely good dude. And Tony was telling us he was dead, a difficult concept to digest. But Tony had been extremely animated, and he and Carl were very tight. Tony got in the van, and we made a U-turn. He was spattered with blood. He was extremely excited as he gave us the details. They'd been flying low to avoid radar detection as they crossed the Florida coastline near Boca Raton. The right wing and engine had clipped an aluminum extension on a radio tower. A piece of it had broken off and came crashing through the cockpit windshield. It nearly decapitated Carl, who was in the co-pilot seat, killing him instantly. There was no doubt about that. So, after putting the plane down in a huge patch of sawgrass, Tony had wiped down the cockpit as best he could, grabbed all the paperwork he could find that might incriminate him, and slipped off into the surrounding quagmire. He had somehow managed to put the load down on its belly. He should have been licensed for "belly landings in the swamp", too. We bumped along the rough road back to the airstrip as fast as we could. When we got there, confusion reigned. Tony took a shower and changed clothes while we futilely tried to figure out a viable course of action. But there was none. Carl was dead. His body was sitting in the wreckage of the Titan Ambassador, along with a ton, literally, of marijuana, in the depths of the Everglades.

Tony's world had come crashing in, too. He needed to get back to Ft. Lauderdale to tie up some loose ends before he could disappear into the sunset, which was his only option. He knew the cops would be coming for him. As soon as authorities found the wreckage and identified the remains, they would also be able to identify who the pilot had been and link it to "Cash Green", one of Tony's aliases. As he and I headed back to Fort Lauderdale, Tony riding shotgun, we passed the downed Titan. It was the earliest twilight of dawn. We could actually see it from the highway, mostly because Tony knew where it was. Still, it wouldn't be long before someone spotted the wreckage and reported it. How long would it take them to process that crime scene?

I dropped Tony off at his compound on S.W. 15th Avenue, near the Davie Boulevard exit on I-95. I assured him that I would help him in any way I could. I drove to Star Island and dropped the details of the devastating news on Tommy. He would have to deal with the media onslaught. As soon as they figured out the connection between the wrecked aircraft and the Church, they'd have a feeding frenzy. At some point in our growing confusion, Clifton and I trudged up the staircase in the big house on Star Island. We knocked on the door of the apartment where Sister Jayne was staying with their children. Standing in the doorway, Cliff told her the tragic news. It was like a military officer delivering that message to the widow of a soldier who had fallen in combat. It was still hard to comprehend what had happened. Jayne must have been in total shock too. She just closed the door. Carl was dead.

I drove over to Tampa a few days later to meet up with Tony at a motel where he'd been staying. By then, he'd gotten his business in order, enough so that he was ready to get out of Dodge. And out of the country. He had chosen Australia as the place where he'd go, mostly because English was its primary language ... and it was a long, long way from the United States.

Tony had a new set of fake IDs with a passport to match. He had prepared in advance for any complications. The new ID was in the name of a doctor who had recently moved on to the next life. But it had once been a real person. With a good set of papers, the only other thing he needed was money. Cash! And one of his favorite aliases throughout his career of infamy in the marijuana smuggling profession had been "Cash Green". Tony was the epitome of flamboyance, and even though he was Dr. So-and-So on his new paperwork, he still exuded the persona of Cash Green. It was impossible to pull it off, though, with neither the cash nor the green. So I took him a satchel full of C-notes. It was money he had already earned.

Tony had a friend in Tampa who owned a car lot. The guy provided Tony with a car. It was a nearly-new El Dorado with a temporary paper license plate taped inside of the rear window. As we were driving

around looking for some place to grab a bite to eat, flashing red and blue lights came on behind us. The cops! A single officer had pulled us over. The flimsy temporary tag had fallen flat in the back window without us being aware of it. That's an invitation for a blue light special. My ID, though fraudulent as a counterfeit Renoir, passed the superficial scrutiny of the suspicious Tampa police officer, and whatever other process they used back then to check its validity. Clean clear through. Tony's new ID didn't fare so well, though. The cop told us very plainly that the name Tony had given him was that of a deceased M.D. Well, they got that right! But Tony was quick on his feet. He was in the same category with Brother Louv. Those guys could come up with a spontaneous, semi-believable crock of B.S. on the spot to explain away whatever the crisis happened to be. I don't remember the exact gist of the masquerade Tony used to befuddle the officer, but the guy let us go. His only stipulation before he gave back Tony's bogus driver's license was that I would have to drive because I had a valid driver's license. Are you kidding me? It almost seemed like the spirit had intervened again. But Tony was a heathen. At least in the hearts and minds of most of the brethren. Does God help heathens? Hey, it's true. God moves in mysterious ways.

I drove Tony over to Palm Beach International, where he caught the first leg of his passage "down under". I don't remember if Hazel was on the flight with him, but she eventually joined him. I think they got matching Corvettes shortly after arriving in Australia. The 'Vettes were probably white. So much for keeping a low profile. Hazel came back to Ft. Lauderdale twice to pick up money for Tony. I met her at Denny's once to pass off the cash in a small briefcase, and once at Tony's house for a few minutes. I also met Tony's brother one time at the house and gave him some money to keep the adventure going. But for how long?

24 Sanctification

After the carnage at the Canal, we were reeling. More than twenty brothers and one sister, Sister Anne, were under heavy manners after having been arrested at either the Ranch or the Canal ... or both. The high-dollar, negligibly-effective lawyers started appearing like John Crow circling above fresh roadkill. There was a lot of confusion, and just as much delusion. Doubters were silenced. We thought it was a battle to the end between God and Satan, and ultimately we would be victorious. We were going to subdue "Babylon the Great" because we'd been chosen to do it. But underneath the bravado was the slightest hint of, "What the Fuck?!" We plodded on undismayed.

Manny Funes was on our asses. His nose was wide open. He had the scent. He'd appeared in court at both of the Church's major arraignments, thus becoming familiar with the faces and the demeanor of some of the Church members. He could spot 'em a mile away. One day, I was on a flight from Tallahassee to Miami in the company of Brother Lance and Brother Greg, two of the seven who'd been nabbed at the Ranch. Manny, by chance, was on the same flight. He recognized the Italian brothers from the arrests at the Ranch. They had actually acknowledged each other with a slight nod. But Manny hadn't recognized me. He knew I was with them. The brothers let me know who he was. I sweated the rest of the way to Miami, not knowing what he'd do. When we landed, I disappeared into the crowd, but Manny had gotten a long and close look at me. I was being pursued by the FBI at the same time, so there would have been a file on me. Being a highly-motivated sleuth of long-standing distinction, Manny assembled a Coptic photo album. In the process, he'd discovered who I was and that I was a fugitive from the Feds. He'd also sensed by his gumshoe intuition that we were still doing something, somewhere, and that the seizures at Dunnellon and Crystal River were just the tip of the iceberg. He was right.

The church had two memorable celebrations at Coptic heights in St Thomas, Jamaica. The first one was in September, 1978. It was not only significant because it was the first mass gathering of Church members in one place, but it was also the first time we had displayed our regalia, the ceremonial robes of royalty. We considered ourselves the apostles and disciples of the true Redeemer of Mankind, the Rastaman. "The Rastaman has risen to rule this earth in peace." That was us. And to emphasize the validation of our claim, an historic, yet suspect, event took place in Vatican City, the home of the Pope and the Holy See, which was the central governing body of the Roman Catholic Church. To us, the Pope was a major operative of Satan's worldwide demonic kingdom, Babylon. And the current Pope in 1978, John Paul I, mysteriously died after holding the office for only 33 days. We had been at the peak of our own

celebration when that occurred. We thought, and openly glorified the fact for the remainder of our festivities, that our prayers had "licked him out". Struck him down! It was a sign of our ascension and their demise. Psalms, dancing, songs and chants. That's what had done it. Though we'd absorbed two devastating left hooks to the jaw while executing our mission, we had confidence in our destiny. Lick down Babylon! Our contention was that "black man is God". That didn't leave much for the white folks since all the good roles were taken, but we thought that pretense and knowledge somehow gave us the moral authority to say and do damn near anything.

By then, some of the unity that solidified our purpose was beginning to erode. Brother Keith and his father-in-law, Brother Kootman, had some disagreements. Over money, of course. Though Kootman had been one of the three initial Church elders after Ivy had departed, and appeared on the original paperwork, with a red wax seal, from the Queen of England acknowledging our existence, Keith ostracized him from the inner circle of toadies. He wasn't included in the regalia-wearing flock of poseurs and was relegated to peon status. He did not get one of the flamboyant red, gold and green robes. And Brother Dougie (Samson) eventually lost favor, as well, demoted to a less-preferential standing among the multitude of suck-ups. He, too, had been one of those original three elders appearing on the articles of incorporation. Those guys were eventually dismissed as "fuckery". If you didn't kowtow to Keith, your standing evaporated, and fuckery was added to the legacy of whoever disagreed. "Ah fuckery dat!"

We moved tons of ganja between the gathering in 1978 and our second, far more grandiose sanctification in August, 1979. August being significant in Jamaica because it represented both the abolition of slavery in 1834 and the gaining of independence from the United Kingdom in 1962.

Coptic Heights was our prodigious compound in the scenic foothills of the Blue Mountains. Our multi-day observance was a gala celebration. There were members and guests from all over the world in attendance. The regalia in '79 was far more colorful and extravagant than it had been the previous year. Shoulder capes proclaimed the identifying line of specific chants that had been "given" to various brothers by Brother Wally. It was considered an honor to wear one of those colorful, bespoke garments. Tools of the hierarchy. All the surrounding land, as far as the eye could see, was a productive agricultural Utopia. There were uniforms, gowns and other garments created for the ceremonies. Everyone was decked out. Red, gold and green everywhere. There were long, slow processions to various solemn services. Keyboards, guitars, drums and a little brass. Cameras recorded every facet of the spectacle. The entire cosmic was not only impressive, it was down-home inspirational. People were strutting their stuff. Everybody seemed to be in good spirits despite the two major catastrophes looming over us like a dark cloud.

We'd been in the news often, almost constantly, since the Ranch. Several crews filmed the festivities for posterity. "60 Minutes" had done a segment on the Church, but it hadn't aired yet. Several brothers and sisters had given interviews. Some appeared on TV shows. Some spoke on radio shows. It wasn't the "Greatest Show on Earth", but neon lights were flashing. It was heady stuff, except for the busts which had actually led to the publicity. A month and a half after our sanctification, Carl lost his life when the Titan Ambassador hit the tower. We were still moving plenty of ganja to America and bringing the proceeds back to Jamaica, but high overhead in the U.S. because of the legal quagmire and extravagant lifestyles, both home and abroad, were taking a big bite out of the Treasury. After Carl died, there was an uneasy sense of foreboding. A multitude of myths had been shattered. If Carl hadn't made it through the minefield, the rest of us didn't have much of a chance.

Keith had gone back to Jamaica shortly after his release on bond from the bust at the Canal. The extradition treaty between the United States and Jamaica allowed for the U.S. to extradite their own citizens, but they couldn't touch Jamaican citizens. "Kick rocks!" So Keith was safe down on the island from the reaches of Uncle Sam. If he stayed there, which he did, the half-mil bond would just be blown off, as it should have been. But the financial tolls were mounting.

The segment done by "60 Minutes" finally appeared on T.V. October 28, 1979. Carl was already dead. The most memorable quote came from Dan Rather: "Law enforcement agencies say that with his newfound American friends, Keith Gordon's marijuana business took off like a turpentine cat. From being a small-time pusher, he quickly grew to head an organization that controlled cultivation and large-scale distribution right into the United States." We all hated the fact that our whole existence was so transparent. We denied it, even to ourselves, but Dan had hit the nail on the head.

25 Getting a new Boat, St. John

After the disaster in the Everglades, it became more and more evident that we would have to find someplace other than Florida to continue making money 'the old-fashioned way'. We had burned all of our bridges in the Sunshine State. Two of the brothers went on a mission to scour the Atlantic coast for a new spot to bring in the ganja. It wasn't an easy task. They progressively worked their way north, discarding potential places in Georgia, then up through the Carolinas and Virginia. Futile! We needed deepwater access to the Atlantic, a knowledge of the demographics of the surrounding area and total privacy. They checked out a few places, but ultimately, none of them met our rigid criteria. Finally, they did find a spot that felt right to both Brother David and his road dog.

Deer Isle, Maine. It was a long way from home. In many ways that made the place even more enticing, but it also presented tremendous logistical hurdles. The requirements of the supporting apparatus necessary to pull off our next movement were enormous. We would have to re-establish our operation all over again, a long way from our comfort zone. Fortunately, the brothers already had a couple of places in Massachusetts. That helped ease the transition. So we decided to do it there. In Maine. David bought a place in Stockton Springs, Maine. It had a nice home, a huge greenhouse, and an equipment shed. A few days later, he bought a beautiful waterfront estate on East Penobscot Bay. A very nice place with three houses and a couple of expansive garages. It was surrounded by thick woods and underbrush. It was completely isolated. The view from shore was picturesque, and the wooden pier was more than serviceable, no matter what the tide level might be. It fluctuated several feet every day. Twice a day.

In late May, 1980, Judy, the kids and I moved up from the place at Carrabelle and into the new ground-zero estate. The kids loved it. Plenty of blacktop driveway for endless hours of skateboarding and roller-blading. RamRam had acquired an A.K.C. registered German Shepherd direct from Germany. Spritz. That may have been a bit eccentric, but Spritz took to his new owners and immediately became very protective of the kids. After a while, Sister Diane came up, too, and moved into one of the houses with her and Sheldon's baby daughter. RamRam helped me set up two dummy businesses so we could legitimately buy the vehicles, boats, equipment and other necessary supplies to carry out our plan. One of the companies was "Paradise Landscaping", a suitable pairing with the greenhouse operation. Things were looking up. The Coptic Navy needed a new boat, too. It would have to be capable of carrying monster loads. It was up to Brad and Duppy to handle that. They canvassed the market before settling on a 69-foot steel-hulled trawler

with long range fuel capacity. Just the thing we needed. It was docked at a pier in St. John, New Brunswick. For sale by owner, no broker involved. Another step closer to the North Pole. They bought it.

It took weeks of preparation to get the vessel ready to retrieve a multi-ton load of weed. Serious commitment was required to pull it off. And plenty of do-re-mi. As the work was being done in St. John, the brothers needed some specific supplies, and, more importantly, an infusion of cash. RamRam and I made a trip up there from Deer Isle with those necessities. We spent a few days with the crew, lending a hand where we could. Everything was going smoothly. We left them in good spirits. On the way back to Deer Isle we had to, of course, pass through the U.S. Customs Station near Calais. The Border Agent came up to the car and actually stuck his head in the window. He said he smelled marijuana. Oh, shit! Here we go again. Our carelessness had us twisting in the wind. He wanted to search the car ... and us. Fortunately, we'd had enough sense to hide the pipe and our stash of ganja in an easily accessible air-conditioning vent. The agents couldn't find anything. They didn't have dogs then, at least not that day at that crossing station. But they just knew we were guilty of something. Next, they wanted to search us. Strip search. They took us inside their small station hut and strip-searched each of us separately. And each of us had a fat knot of cash, which was usually how we rolled. That made them even more suspicious. Then they found a second ID I had stashed away in my wallet. Yep! Obviously, it wasn't hidden all that well. Two separate IDs. Both were fake. My hubris and stupidity once again on display. But we were already in an offensive mode, and our predicament only exacerbated our boldness. In voices loud enough for anyone nearby to hear, we started slinging out our usual accusations regarding their violations of Moses laws, calling them Sodomites and naming other unseemly infractions we'd found them guilty of committing ... without a trial. I explained away the dual IDs by insisting that I was a writer, an author, and that the second ID was a literary pseudonym. Like Samuel Clemens and Mark Twain. I said it was necessary for me to have both of them in order to conduct business. It was the best I could come up with on short notice. I told them that I had several books published and they could be found in upscale bookstores. Is there such a thing as a downscale bookstore? What can I say? When they ran my IDs (one was a driver's license from Florida, and the other a DL from Massachusetts) they both came back clean. They were real. They'd been issued by the respective states. Once again, the spirit had intervened. They let us go. Even we were a little surprised. We knew it was the hand of the Almighty. No question. RamRam and I had a few good laughs on the way back to Deer Isle, and after we got back there too. But our focus was set on making preparations for a big load. One the new boat would be hauling up to us in a very short time.

The boat made it to Deer Isle in early July, 1980, with a huge load, carrying the freight all the way to Maine from the Isle of Patmos. Jamaica. They'd encountered perilous seas along the way. The 69-foot

trawler with twin Gardner Diesels had been so loaded down that it had taken on a lot of water. Enough so that Brad, captain of the ship on that trip, had to make a difficult decision. They tossed scores of bales overboard into the Atlantic Ocean, never to be seen again. And they had still arrived with a small mountain of blocks. We stacked them everywhere around the yard as we offloaded the valuable cargo. The boat crew always performed magnificently. They were all tough and courageous. It was another manifestation of selfless dedication. None of them got paid for doing it. Your pay was simple. You'll be going on another move as soon as we can get it together. Huge sums of money were needed both in Jamaica and in the U.S., where the cost of doing business was mounting exponentially. But they had made it back safely, so we had something to work with.

The brothers and sisters disposed of the weighty contraband with speed and efficiency. That was our goal, and that's what we did.

26 Rigaus, Tampa Airport, Hillsborough County

After Carl died, the responsibilities he had so efficiently and selflessly carried out every day obviously had to be done by someone else. I inherited a few of them. Carl had almost exclusively been the liaison between Tony and the rest of the Church members. The ace airman rarely came to Star Island. Once he and Carl got everything going on a regular basis, he didn't show up there anymore. The place and the brothers were under constant scrutiny, so the best way for Tony to maintain his anonymity included not being seen at the Star or with any of the brothers. Wisely, that's the way he played it. His lifestyle and personality were anathema to the strict way of life the Church members expounded and, seemingly, lived. Dull and dreary. And very judgmental toward anything or anyone who didn't adhere to our daily drudgery. Tony was a free spirit. Most of the brothers were incapable of handling the contrast that slight anomaly presented. But Carl had been a diplomat. He was naturally equipped to make the adjustments necessary to accommodate his friend's apparent dichotomy. In a lot of ways, Tony was far more genuine than most of us proved to be. Or not to be.

Subsequent to the crash, I was delegated to deal with him. He was definitely high-maintenance and flamboyant. He'd been used to total freedom, but his new predicament presented some unfamiliar new pressures. He was going to have to make some adjustments, and he absolutely had to go on the lam. So I delivered Tony to the Palm Beach International Airport about a week after the accident. I never saw him again. I did take money that was owed to him for services rendered to Hazel on two separate occasions in Ft. Lauderdale. Once I met his brother at Tony's house with a tidy sum of cash to facilitate his existence on the Southern-Hemisphere continent. But he didn't last long in Australia. Elena (a.k.a. Hazel) got tired of Tony, but she wanted to keep the final infusion of cash that we owed him. She set him up. In Hawaii. Working with Manny Funes, she lured Tony to the Aloha State under some pretense. That's where the Florida cop put the cuffs on the swashbuckling flyboy. Another one bites the dust! And Hazel made off with the cash. How many lap dances would it have taken for the one-time danseuse to earn that much scratch? Elena had been Tony's girlfriend, and that for just a short time. But after the double dealing, she could easily have passed for "Mrs. Cash Green".

I remember a couple of things well that Tony told me during our short association. One was the details of the accident the moment they'd hit the tower and the immediate aftermath. Contrary to some newspaper accounts, he said the tower had only been 90 feet tall with a vertical aluminum loop that extended another 10 feet up. FAA regulations dictated that any structure over 100 feet tall had to have a flashing

white light at the very top. Whatever it was, they'd had the altimeter set at 125 feet. Perhaps the equipment malfunctioned. No one can be sure why, but they clipped the aluminum extension on the radio tower. I actually went up to Boca Raton to see the inanimate object, but there was nothing to look at. I had to see that for myself, though. Then Tony told me some of the details about what had happened at the moment of impact and the immediate aftermath. The media account said the plane had flipped upside down after contact and that the experienced combat pilot was able to right it. He told me he had flown reconnaissance over the flight path several times during daylight hours, solo, to familiarize himself with the topography between Boca and the strip. That's how he'd known where to put the Titan down on its belly after hitting the tower. He described how he'd wiped down everything and gathered his paperwork before slipping into the nearly-impenetrable swamp. The media reported that investigators had later found the bundle of papers partially buried a short distance from the wreckage. Then he'd made his way, in total darkness and confusion, to the place where we found him crouched in the bushes. Very few people have the rare instincts to maintain focus under that kind of intense pressure. He had balls the size of coconuts. Like I said before, Tony was a bonafide badass. But like most of us, he had his weaknesses too. Behold, all is vanity and vexation of the spirit. Whatever that means.

We had made another seemingly beneficial connection through Tony. His Florida attorneys for much of his somewhat illustrious career in the marijuana smuggling business had been Abe and Roger Rigau, father and son. That relationship led to Abe, the old man, being appointed by the court to represent the indigent immigrant who'd turned informant. Robert F. DeMarco. Johnny. The Jamaican rude boy was wanted in his native country for a host of felonious acts, including murder and escape from prison. If he went back to Jamaica for any reason and the 'lice caught up with him, they would simply kill him. He knew that. From that point, it didn't take long to become familiar with some of the less virtuous aspects of jurisprudence in Tampa, Florida. The underbelly.

I was involved in a chaotic scene at the Tampa International Airport in early September, 1980. We had already successfully completed one major ganja movement to the place on the Deer Isle estate more than a month prior to my fateful encounter at the airport. All the ganja had been quickly moved off the property for distribution and we were preparing for our next campaign. But there were always a number of inconvenient Church matters that had to be dealt with along the way. One of those was the combo of Johnny and his attorney. At the time, the indictment for the fiascos at the Ranch and the Canal had not been handed down yet. There was a grand jury convening in Miami to determine who would be on those "true bills". Conveniently, the Rigaus had had a source within the system who was willing to leak the minutes of those secret proceedings to us. For a price. That's the way things were often accomplished in the U.S.A. And

everywhere else, really. Old man Rigau, Abe, represented Johnny. So we had a conduit for inside information in the case. A scheme was being worked out so that Johnny would move to another unspecified country, at our expense, in exchange for him being absent from the witness stand in the Marion County case. If successful, the ploy would seriously undermine the government's case. Well, supposedly. So that day in Tampa, I had arrived from Boston with a cash payment to facilitate the plan, something I had previously done. If memory serves me, and I know it does, the amount was \$200,000. A briefcase stuffed with "Caesar", our haughty codeword for money. The real green stuff. Roger Rigau, the son, and I would meet at the airport. That's how we did it. He'd pick me up at Arrivals in front of the main terminal in his cool little Mercedes 450SL. Then we would ride around discussing the machinations involved with the plan. One time I actually had a small tape recorder in my pocket taping our conversation, so we would have some leverage in case something happened. We had difficulty trusting barristers. It all sounded good at the time, but in retrospect it looks very nefarious. We could justify anything in the name of our cause. We considered that everyone but us was tied in with Babylon somehow. Oh, and the quality of the recording turned out to be garbage anyway. Nothing but static and gibberish. Somehow, that's a relief. Roger absolutely hated it when I would light up a spliff in his pristine sports car, but suffering from assholeitis myself, I'd do it anyway. I had the cash, so he acquiesced. Then after our little chat, he'd drop me off at Departures and I'd be on my way. Not so fast!

I checked in at the gate, and sat down for a few minutes waiting for my flight to be called. Some guy approached me. He identified himself, showed me his badge and asked for my ID, all in one breath. Fuck!! It was Manny Funes. He'd recognized me from our previous encounter more than two years prior to that, on the flight to Miami with Lance and Greg. And there he was ... again. We'd both been booked on the same flight to Miami ... again. And I hadn't recognized him until he'd flashed his badge. Manny quickly called over an airport cop for backup. He explained the situation to his colleague, and together they intended to take me over to the International Terminal to determine my true identification. Manny knew I was a fugitive, but he hadn't been able to remember my name. He felt certain that he'd be able to zero in on who I was at the other terminal where, supposedly, they had more in-depth information regarding international fugitives. So off we went, one of them posted on either side of me as we walked in that direction. In 1980, the Tampa Airport was set up like an old-time wagon wheel. A central hub with spokes running out to each of the four airside terminals. Monorails carried passengers out to each and returned them back. We rode in silence from the gate of our Miami flight back to the main terminal. And from there we'd have to catch another monorail out to the International gate. That's where Manny intended to properly identify me and then snap on the cuffs. We stepped onto the monorail car together. The doors on the left side closed a second or two before the doors on the right. As those doors closed, I broke and ran. It was the rabbit in me. My timing had

given me a little advantage. They'd had to wait for the doors to open again. I ran for the escalator, but I was going against the flow of the crowd. I was going down; they were coming up. The terminal entrance on the ground level was down a flight. I descended the narrow, moving staircase against a stream of people going up, shouting frantically, "Out of my way!", as I made tracks for the exit. There was no place to go, but I never considered that. Out the front door I went. I could hear the posse clamoring in pursuit. They probably went down the escalator the right way, because it seemed like they were gaining on me. Outside the terminal, I turned left and was running down the walkway opposite the flow of the automobile traffic that was driving up the slight incline. I turned my head as I was running to see how far behind me the bloodhounds were. That's when I stepped into a furrow next to the sidewalk. Landscapers had created the neat groove to facilitate the water runoff, but they got me, too, before I could run off. I went down. My ankle twisted like a pretzel. I managed to get up and start hobbling away, but they soon caught me. Nowhere to go anyway. Running doesn't have much of a success rate, but it was in my nature. I'm just lucky to walk these days, much less run. Manny and I exchanged barbs for a few minutes, but it was clear to both of us that he had gotten the best of me. 7-plus years on the run came to an abrupt end. I was gassed. 36 years old and a very heavy marijuana smoker. Not much wind left to sprint like that.

After the fall, my ankle was a mess. I couldn't walk. They got a wheelchair and pushed me back to the terminal. After some initial fuss, they hauled my ass over to the old Hillsborough County Jail. Manny was proud of himself, and well he should have been. I was bummed out, and well I should have been. But I was still unrepentant. They put me in the holding cell waiting to be booked into the jail. While I was there, Roger Rigau came strolling through. Of all people! When he saw me behind the bars, I think he crapped his pants. He was shocked and totally paranoid. He'd been there drumming up business, or some such tale. After we talked for a few minutes through the bars, he realized my plight was separate from the briefcase full of U.S. dollars I'd given him only a short time before. To his great relief. Lucky him. I, on the other hand, had a rocky road ahead.

The time I spent in the Hillsborough County Jail at the close of 1980 had been fraught with high adventure. I'd been a wanted man (how badly they wanted me is up for debate) for more than seven years, since my alleged escape from Eglin in '73, so there was no bond for me. One time while pursuing me, they had stopped at my mother's house. Dad's house, too, but only Ma was there that day. 1945 4th Avenue S.E., Cedar Rapids, Iowa. I'd grown up there. After telling the elderly neighbor lady, Juanita Trachta, that I was not only wanted, but that I was armed and dangerous, they told my mother that they would simply wait until she (my mother) died, and then they would just pick me up at her funeral. A little morbid, but all's fair in love and war. Catching me after so many failures by the U.S. Marshals and the F.B.I. had been

a nice feather in Manny's cap. My immediate destiny included a stay in the old county jail until my Federal fugitive case was resolved. Then I would be remanded to the B.O.P. to serve out the remainder of my old sentence and any additional time that may be added on because of the escape. It didn't look too good.

I spent about four months in the old dungeon before my legal turmoil was finally resolved. Brother Tommy came to my rescue again. He hired an esteemed local attorney for me, even though he was in the midst of a crippling investigation himself: by the Feds, by the State of Florida and by the incorporated municipality of Miami Beach. Tommy paid my lawyer 50 grand, cash. The money produced a connection through Art Massey, one of Tommy's legal advisors. Paul C. Johnson. He'd been in the State's Attorney's Office for 20 years, or so, before going into private practice. He'd earned the court's respect. They addressed him as the Honorable Paul C. Johnson in the courtroom because of his professional stature in that jurisdiction. When I met him, we got along just fine. Before discussing my case though, he was curious why both fake IDs I had in my possession at the time of my arrest were Jewish names: Richard Glass and Stephen Rosenbaum. I knew Rosenbaum was Jewish because his brother, Howard, was a dear friend of mine. He'd given me his younger brother Steven's ID. I'll talk more about Howard later. He was the most unusual character in the whole melodrama. Imagine that! But I never would have guessed that Glass was a Jewish surname. Then Paul C. told me that his name, Johnson, was also Jewish. I would have missed that one for sure, too. After a little discussion about genealogies, we got to the reason for our conference. He told me straight off how he intended to handle the case. He planned to keep postponing my court date until it randomly fell onto the docket of a favorable judge. A judge the Honorable Paul C. knew behind the scenes. The pair often golfed at the same country club, they belonged to the same exclusive men's club and, moreover, their wives went shopping together on occasion. Nice. In fact, the day before my scheduled court appearance, the Honorable Judge and the Honorable Paul C. had lunch together at their private club to go over the details. It was getting better all the time. When we finally appeared in court, it would be hard to imagine a more fortuitous outcome. Mr. Johnson (imagine going through life with a name like that) took time to expound on my attributes. I was a good husband, a father of three, a U.S. Army veteran, and some more incidental accolades. He explained away my fugitive history as sincere religious conviction. Otherwise, nobody could be that stupid, he implied. That was good enough for His Honor. He decreed that I would have to complete the original sentence from which I had absconded, and he sentenced me to an additional six months for the escape. Paul C. had handled his business. At that time, escape from Federal Prison carried an almost automatic 5-year hit. 60 months. I was delighted. Altogether I'd have to serve about 10 months, four of which I'd already done in the county jail. I'd dodged another bullet.

In my mind, of course, the Spirit had saved me once again. I said my Psalms over and over in my solitude. It was always a great comfort to me to say some Psalms. The four months I spent in that old jail house had some very memorable moments. For me, at least.

It was a Friday when I got busted by Manny, so when they booked me in, I had to spend the weekend in a big holding cell. I could barely walk. My ankle had turned purple and yellow with some greenish highlights. It looked like a tie-dye T-shirt designed by a hippie on a bad LSD trip. By chance, I was able to get the attention of a passing guard. He walked by periodically tapping the bars to be sure, by the sound of the tapping, that nobody had surreptitiously been sawing at them. And to be sure everybody was still alive. S.O.P. I struck up a conversation. My experiences in Jamaica, living with poor black people, gave me some insight into the centuries-old curse of slavery. I had a very real understanding of the politics and the wickedness that had held great portions of humanity in servitude for more than 400 years. Because of my superficial enlightenment to the long suffering, I was able to touch the guy's spirit somehow. Each time he passed, we shared a little discourse about the plight of the black man. When he was on duty the next night, I appealed to his compassion. I explained that I had been locked up for over 24 hours and that I was still wearing the stench and discomfort of my most recent ordeal. I said that I wouldn't be able to make commissary until possibly Tuesday, and that I would really appreciate some of my basic toiletries, which I happened to have in the bag of property they'd taken from me at the airport (i.e. deodorant, my toothbrush and toothpaste). And then he revealed that he had access to the property room where they kept all that stuff. Oh my! We talked for a while more, and he soon did the humanitarian thing. He brought me a few of the things I had requested. I was elated. One of the items delivered to me was an aerosol can of Right Guard deodorant. It had a secret stash compartment. The bottom of the can screwed off, revealing a cylindrical void. Except it wasn't void. I had a nice little chunk of fine Colombian Red hidden inside. Without even a second thought, I immediately gave thanks to the Almighty for delivering me from the travail of a lonely jail cell. I had some good herbs in the depths of hell. It's impossible to imagine the attraction a little good marijuana elicits under tumultuous conditions. So I'll have to tell you. Good ganja in jail produces an amazing effect on the soul. And I had the natural understanding of the ravages that religion, politics and commerce had wrought upon mankind. Armed with the ganja, we were able to give peace a chance. Until Monday morning, at least. That was when I had to appear before the judge for arraignment. He accepted my not-guilty plea and stated the obvious. No bail for me due to my long fugitive status. I was a flight risk. But my wings had been clipped.

Afterward, I was taken off to my new home, an 8-man cell on the 2nd floor. There were 4 double bunks, two crappers, and a separate small room with two stainless steel tables. It was a dayroom/dining

area. They gave me the paper bag containing my personal property. God bless them. I still had a small piece of the redbud to smooth my entrance into the new environment. And to serve me well. It did the trick, but I soon ran short of the magical substance. Brother Tommy to the rescue, again. He hired another attorney for me. I'll call him Mike, because that's what his name is. A friend of Rasta Jack. Mike wasn't hired to replace Paul C. He was retained to be an additional member of the bar team attempting to help me navigate the rapids. The first time Mike came to see me in the privacy of the special attorney-client visiting room, he brought me a beautiful hunk of blonde Lebanese hashish. Ecstasy. I got it back to my cell in the bottom of a small pack of Bugler rolling tobacco that we could buy off the commissary wagon. None of those tactics could be pulled off today, but in 1980 there wasn't the same level of security, and I was living on the cutting edge of insanity anyway. Mike had some pretty big stones at the time too. In my mind, he was a benevolent angel delivering me from terminal drudgery. It only took a very small piece of the pungent, pliable resin to deliver me straight to Zion, our terminology for heaven on earth. So break me off a piece of that gooey golden bar. I was set for weeks to come.

Things went along smoothly for a couple of weeks while I awaited the contrived posturing of the legal system. Then one night, after I'd already gone to sleep, several of the other inmates were playing poker. There was a new white guy in the cell that day. Apparently, he got in the game and lost his ass. Not literally, but close. They'd been playing for commissary items, which came around on a cart every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. If you had money on your account, you could shop for hygiene essentials and snacks. The new guy got in over his head. Sometime during the course of events, he summoned one of the passing guards and whispered something to him. Within a few minutes, they came and took him out of the cell under the pretense of giving him an emergency phone call. As soon as he got alone with the cops, he snitched us out. He told the cops that we'd been smoking pot. He was close. It was actually a chunk of very aromatic hashish. After losing imaginary money in the poker game, he'd used that ruse to get away from the consequences of his stupidity. He'd become paranoid and wanted to save his ass, so to speak. The result was that they'd come in on us in the early morning hours and shook the place down. The tattletale hadn't known who'd actually had the offending substance, so they hadn't been able to zero in on me. I'd had the critically important nugget stashed in a plastic, green-and-white Mennen Speed Stick deodorant. I'd used 2 plastic bottoms to create a void. Like the aerosol can of Right Guard, the Mennen Speed Stick passed their scrutiny, too.

Nobody else broke weak, not even Thomasina, the resident drag queen. He hadn't actually smoked with us, but he held his mud like a real convict. They didn't know whether the informant had made it up or if we'd already smoked it up, but they were pissed and decided to split us up. They moved me across the

hallway into a 16-man cell. It was a similar setup, only bigger. The mood was quite different. No rapport whatsoever. There was pure hatred in every scowl. The very first morning in the new cell told the story. At 4 a.m. every day, the trustees came around with an insulated food cart delivering breakfast. They would simply pass the trays through the bean hole, the little fold-down trapdoor. Whoever happened to be awake and stirring would spread out the trays on one of the tables. The number of trays was equal to the number of inmates in that particular cell. The jailhouse axiom was simple, "Snooze, you lose". It was just like it implies. The breakfast trays were gobbled up by whoever was there at the table. I was the only white guy who was awake that morning. There were four or five black guys, too. The others were asleep. I took one of the trays, and watched as the remainder were quickly devoured. Holy Ghost! Then I found out by listening to the banter that their behavior was the customary protocol. Whoever was awake got the food. And it was usually very racially oriented. One day, the black guys scarfed down the grub. The next day, the white guys and a Native American greedily ate someone else's breakfast. "Dog Eat Dog." Life in the fast lane.

Usually with me, after a cup of weak coffee and some powdered eggs, I'm ready to take a dump. Most everyone had gone back to bed, so I figured it would be the best time to use one of the two stainless steel heads. There was no privacy, so I'd have to make do. The toilets were right there, wide open, a few feet from the closest bunk. And I had to go. No choice, get busy. The fetid stench wafted into the air. Good God!! The two guys in the nearest bunk woke up, if they weren't awake already. "Put some water on that shit!", one of them grumbled, overwhelmed by the foul smell. I'd already flushed a couple of times. But some things just can't be disguised. That was one of them.

George, a light-skinned dude about my age, slept on the top bunk. "Miami Slim", a tall, shiny-black teenager, obviously from Miami, was stretched out on the bottom. I didn't wait to atone for my sin. "Hey, you guys don't know who I am", I introduced myself confidently. "I'm the ganja man and I have some ganja. Hang on. I'll get it." They were stunned by my nonchalant demeanor. "Who is this son of a bitch?" I finished up, flushed the john a final time, and then retrieved a tobacco-laced doobie that had a blonde kicker mixed in. We went into the deserted dining area and took "a ride on the Reading", passing "Go" immediately.

The mythological "nectar of the gods" transformed us right there, in that dank jail cell. We were able to transcend the centuries-old acrimony between black and white. It may have been fleeting, but it was real. We somehow became the long lost brothers from another dimension, reuniting once again. Real fellowship, if that's possible. That's just one example from countless anecdotes I have regarding the mystical properties of the stuff highlighted in "Reefer Madness". That's one of the reasons I consider the herb to be my

sacrament. The inherent spirit of the hash broke down all the archaic barriers. The next morning, and for many mornings to follow, we woke everyone for breakfast. It was like magic. We played cards and board games together like children, laughing often at the novelty of our unfamiliar camaraderie. Eventually, as some guys left and new ones arrived, that sense of unity diminished and the age-old animosities reappeared. It's always good to be thankful for what we have when we have it.

27 Deer Isle, Maine

Nothing slowed down just because I was in the clink. The brothers and sisters continued making preparations for the next load. A couple of new outlets had opened up for selling the herb, so the brothers could turn large quantities for immediate cash return, which was desperately needed because of the mounting costs of doing business and the never-ending demand for greenbacks in Jamaica. Thousands of previously poor islanders depended on the money generated by the ganja. An entire economy. Payrolls, business expenses, newfound freedoms, a lifestyle with some dignity. The anticipated increase in the size of our next load would require a different boat. One that could hold a much bigger payload. The yield from 1000 pounds of ganja on the retail market covered the cost of the Jubilee, a 103-foot yacht they picked up down around Galveston, Texas. Keith intended to load it up. They would load much more than an extra thousand pounds on the larger vessel. No more throwing excess bales overboard. And more bodies would be needed to handle the weighty increase. Several brothers who'd never been in on that highly-secretive portion of Church activities were summarily summoned to fill the void. Mike Riz, Cave Dave, Gil, White David, and Robert. Several more who'd helped previously at other offloading spots, but who'd missed the first movement up there in Maine, joined the fray.

Judy, Brian, Jennifer and Dan lived in one of the three houses at the waterfront estate. I'd lived there too before the episode at the Tampa airport, but I'd been residing elsewhere since. Sister Diana, Brother Sheldon's significant other, stayed in the small house up the hill with their toddler daughter. Sheldon was an intricate part of the boat crew. He was the #1 diesel mechanic. The main house closest to the rocky shorefront was the gathering place for everyone else, sort of a meeting spot when a few of the brothers and sisters came by for prayer. Lance and Greg lived at the nursery in Stockton Springs, about an hour away. Conscientiously and with great pride, they took care of both places. Their dedication and skillfulness were absolutely necessary to function as we did. As the time drew nearer, there were many red flags, telltale signs that our ground-zero location had been compromised. When the cops had arrested me in Tampa, I'd had some incriminating particulars about the Deer Isle place in my briefcase. I know I had a list of phone numbers, which I thought I had encrypted, but my encryption was, obviously, obvious to them. When I recently saw him prior to his passing, Brother Pops reminded me that I also had some photos of the tide fluctuations along the shore and the tide table. But even before my faux pas, the cops had a bead on us. They'd been suspicious because both places (the nursery property and the shorefront estate) had been purchased within days of each other, for cash, and, apparently, a large order of furniture had been obtained for cash in Bangor and delivered to the Deer Isle address. We found out later through legal discovery that

the place had been under surveillance from across the bay since July. Our first move there had been successful by a whisker. They'd already had surveillance set up from across the bay. In retrospect though, almost everyone had some slight measure of uncertainty, but we were totally conditioned to ward off any doubt and just crash straight into the bridge abutment. On the night of the move, Greg spotted three squad cars parked in a darkened Dairy Queen parking lot on his way over from the nursery in the early evening hours. He'd never seen any cops around there before, and told everybody as much when he'd arrived. Nobody wanted to hear that shit. At some point in the unfolding spectacle, they'd heard a death knell over the police scanner, too, before any unloading had begun. "Mothership!" came across clearly on the police frequency, along with static and some other gibberish.

The "King of Kings" wasn't there that night, but that beguiling spirit loomed ominously. They decided to bring it in anyway. Hell, there might be a few other "motherships" up that way late at night that the cops could be talking about. We were programmed like mindless robots. Get it done! So they brought it in. 27 tons. 54,000 pounds. 1263 bales of tightly-pressed commercial weed. There probably weren't two pipe loads of really good-quality smoke in the whole mess. Two jon boats, two Zodiac inflatable rafts. and a Bayliner shuttled back and forth from the Jubilee to the shore with load after load. The conveyor belt setup that we had set up between the shore and the storage garages was quickly overwhelmed by the weight of so many blocks. It slowed down to a crawl. The bales piled up in the yard. A small mountain. The Jubilee was almost completely unloaded when the wall came tumbling down.

At 3:05 A.M. on the morning of October 20, 1980, the raid began. Sirens blaring and the red-and-blue lights flashing. The cops announced their arrival over loud megaphones. "Police! Police! You're under arrest!" Yeah, sure. Instead of a gathering, it was a scattering. Almost everybody took off into the woods or disappeared along the rocky shore. Judy, Jennifer and Dan just stayed in the house until all the arrests were made. Brian, who was 14 years old at the time, got away into the trees and made his way up a hill where he could see and hear the goings-on below. He took in the chaos from his chilly hilltop perch. Jake jumped in the water and tried to make his escape that way, but the water was so cold his body temperature dropped below 95 degrees, and his organs began to shut down. The cops fished him out of the icy brine. Hypothermia had set in. "Shiver me timbers!"

Eventually, they rounded up and charged 23 churchgoers (at our most preeminent service), not counting the children. Brad, who was captain of the Jubilee that night, heard the chaos over the radio. He cut anchor and pushed the throttle all the way forward. Full speed ahead, out to the open ocean. Brian, from his hiding place up on the hill, felt the ground around him tremble as the big diesels roared to life, Brad

navigating the hazardous channels at full throttle. A police patrol boat and the Coast Guard search-and-rescue craft gave chase, but the Jubilee disappeared into the dark night. Finally, a Coast Guard Cutter intercepted them in the open seas and boarded their ship almost two days later. The U.S. Coast Guard is well-equipped to handle just about anything at sea. It's almost impossible to outrun those guys. They knew how to take care of business, and they were equipped to do it.

There were dozens of distressing stories relating to individual traumas that unfolded as people tried to get away. Most of the brothers who were there that night had never been near the place before that moment, or maybe once to help out on the first movement. And half-a-dozen had never set foot in Maine, so their hope of escape was minimal, at best. One brother actually spent two cold nights high up in a tree, praying and freezing his ass off, until they finished the pillaging below and left the premises. He'd been able to go into the main house, clean up, use the facilities, and call a friend to come and pick him up. His escapades that night qualify as a miracle of such magnitude that it merited his shrewd, fearless ass beatification in the annals of marijuana smuggling lore. Remember, there were no cell phones back in the day.

Half a dozen brothers, a teenage boy (White David), and the quintessential German Shepherd (Spritz) managed to get away after long hours battling the raw elements. Brian hid in the bushes the remainder of the night and eventually made it out to the road several miles from the bedlam. It was cold. He was wet and shivering. He knocked on someone's door and asked for help, making up a far-fetched tale to explain why he was standing on their front porch at that hour. But word had already spread in the sleepy community. The guy phoned the police, they came and got him and put him in a juvenile facility.

The court added a 24th defendant with a superseding indictment several weeks later. They'd implicated Brother David for buying the properties. Senior U.S. District Judge, the Honorable Edward T. Gignoux, dismissed the charges against four of the defendants. The three sisters who'd been arrested (Judy, Sister Chris and Sister Diana) and guitar-playing Brother Jim, who'd been picked up walking toward the scene of the crime, rather than away from it. He'd been disoriented, but that small factoid had been enough to merit him an N.G. Not guilty! Cool. Judy was able to retrieve Brian, who'd gone to a foster home by then. The entire experience was just one more example of us being abruptly evicted from home and possessions, never to see them again. I lost a good fake passport and several gold coins that I had buried under the steps of the comfortable redwood house where we'd lived. Start over again. All the vehicles (the cars and the trucks), the boats (especially the Jubilee), the vast array of new equipment, and ultimately the two properties were snatched in an instant. Poof! Like magic. Black magic! More attorneys had to be hired

to represent all the hapless souls, many of whom were thrust into an impossible situation. It was like an acid test to prove their mettle. Everyone who was present that calamitous night has their own personal story to tell. Or not to tell. A lot of things unfolded that night simultaneously, but the final result was disaster for the sisters and the brothers and the Church.

Those three major busts, and the subsequent arrest scenes with impossible court cases to follow, were a crushing blow to our quest for the Holy Grail. It left most of the invaluable smugglers from the Church's hardcore hamstrung. Many had been arrested twice in those three mega-busts; Butch and Lance had gotten nailed all three times. Comprehension is elusive, even for somebody like me who was in the midst of it. How we could continually do the things we did. We were motivated by something very mystical. Something very compelling. And it wasn't just money. We ended up loving money and the lifestyle it provided as much as the next poor sumbitch. But that is not what inspired us originally to make the sacrifices necessary to accomplish all the exploits we willingly undertook. It was much more. Besides being on the cusp of madness, we legitimately thought we were onto something inspired by the Divine. I still have that sense in my old age.

28 The Aftermath After Maine

No doubt, the cops and the courts had put a significant damper on the Church's ganja business. It didn't stop completely, but it did portend the beginning of the end for the green, money-making machine that had fueled the creation and the rise to prominence of the Ethiopian Zion Coptic Church. The mythical "tie that binds" had somehow morphed from a true purity of spirit into an empty vessel of self-delusion. "Has the chewing gum lost its flavor on the bedpost overnight?" The lust for money and the trappings of unbridled prosperity had smothered the mechanism that had facilitated the phenomenon. There were highly-publicized court proceedings, first in Maine and then in South Florida. The I.R.S. had hamstrung our ability to buy our way out of all the annoying kerfuffles that accompanied our activities. And most of all, the brothers and sisters who'd made the thing operate at the level people had grown accustomed to were, for the most part, on the unable-to-perform roster. Court appearances by the brothers became grandiose demonstrations of arrogance. They wore the distinctive colorful robes of our regalia. They rode to and from court in limousines and other gaudy vehicles. They paraded from their chariots accompanied by a bevy of overpriced, highly-touted mouthpieces who won exactly nothing inside the courtroom, save some superficial and temporary illusions. I don't think any of the brothers testified on their own behalf, instead hiding behind the pipedream of an "arbitrary and capricious prosecution" plea by the defense. We had completely lost sight of the gospel that had originally inspired us, becoming instead a laughing stock of voiceless bodies marching to the gallows in ridiculously vaudevillian costumes. Court proceedings in both states consumed time, energy, and a very substantial amount of cash. Some of the brothers were without representation by attorneys while others had boisterous, big-name, money-consuming poseurs. It didn't matter either way. They all got bludgeoned. Greg got a token 'not guilty' verdict in Miami, but 'guilty as charged' in Maine. He still received five years. Brother Jim, a noted guitarist, was found 'not guilty' in Maine and hadn't been indicted in Miami. Otherwise, it was a clean sweep for Uncle Sam.

The defendants had been reduced to defending an untenable argument. The courts acknowledged that we were a church. But we knew that already. And they conceded that marijuana was our sacrament. That was indisputable. It always was, it is now and forever will be. No problem yet. But the transparent lie that we did not sell the consciousness-expanding vegetable matter to increase our coffers was total bullshit. We didn't even believe that horse crap ourselves. Our mothers didn't believe it. I doubt if even one independent observer of the entire proceedings fell for that crock of empty rhetoric. But that seemed to be the only path available. We'd backed ourselves into a corner from which there was no escape. The brothers valiantly

entertained the delusion that somehow we would pull off the great upset and come out of it victorious, but that fantasy was crushed when the prison sentences were handed out.

When the dust settled, all remaining defendants were found guilty. They were sentenced to Federal prison for terms ranging from 5 to 17 years. Under the "old law", which was still in effect then, that translated to anywhere from 20 months to approximately seven years in prison, which was about the amount of time served by both Cliff and Tommy. Everybody else served something less than that, but prison is still prison. They had all been fodder for the ganja-smuggling machine. They were all expendable when push had come to shove. There was no joy in Mudville; mighty Casey had struck out! Keith chewed up the white people and spit them out like a wad of sugar cane trash after the sweetness had been sucked out of it. But those folks can tell their own stories, which most prefer not to do. Some still choose to deify Keith and blow smoke up a dead man's ass.

While serving out their sentences, most of those brothers were left dangling. As intimate as their conversations and personalities had seemed to move in sync, Keith cut Cliff off from any money once he went to prison. Kicked him to the curb. Cliff wasn't even up to the proverbial red-headed stepchild status. The same went for almost all of them. So much for "perfect louv". The wives? Forget about it! It's unpleasant to think such a thing could have happened, but it did. Keith and his closest confidants maintained some semblance of the business. Movement sizes decreased from multi-ton extravaganzas to minimal payloads. And the dedicated, selfless worker ants were mostly locked up, where they languished. Not even a small raise (\$\$) for their commissary accounts. Let them eat cake.

The last time I saw Keith was sometime in 1982. I'd finished serving my time for the escape conviction at the FCI Tallahassee prison. By then, most of the brothers who'd done the lion's share of the smuggling were incapacitated. A couple had gone on the run and were fugitives. Most of the others were in prison. So the airwing of the smuggling apparatus was all that remained viable for a time. One of the brothers, who'd managed to elude arrest at a couple of the other catastrophes, was able to put together something that involved using people other than the ones we considered to be "the brothers". The new crew brought in several loads using the Coptic's plane. All but one of the people who pulled that off were guys that we did not consider to be part of the inner circle. The inner circle being us, the mindless robots.

I flew down to Kingston. Keith and Apple were conducting business from their plush new headquarters in Cherry Gardens. I walked right into a shitstorm. There were two separate versions of what had transpired, and why, regarding the division of the proceeds from those planeloads. The people who had

done the work happened to want their agreed-upon portion. Imagine that! Those guys were holding the Cessna for ransom. They wanted their money. What a strange concept! Keith had gotten so used to controlling where most of the money went that he'd simply rolled over the notion to pay those guys what they had coming. But they weren't the obeisant bootlickers he'd been used to.

While I was there at the house in Cherry Gardens for two or three days, I realized it was a whole new cast of characters. Keith and Alan were the only ones I knew. Everyone else was fresh off the streets. One middle-aged, light-skinned gal insisted on explaining to me, in detail, just which resurrected biblical figures I was amongst. Of course, Keith was at the top of the pyramid. I'd heard that shit for years and still half-ass believed it myself, but that particular messenger had been a little too polished, even for me. Like a well-scripted deodorant commercial.

Keith and Alan were very aloof. Most of their wily scheming was done in private. Hmmm! There were obvious thugs milling about. "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever." Before I left Jamaica, the pair of wannabe prophets pumped me up for an inevitable confrontation with the adversaries. They did everything they could to convince me. But that wasn't difficult. I was easy to convince. The plane belonged to the Church, they argued, which meant it belonged to the brothers, which meant it belonged to me! Somehow, the plane had become mine, and I was charging myself up to go get it. Keith was a master manipulator, and Alan was his machiavellian Robin. I was the stooge. Again! I could have been one of the Three Stooges. Except in our little drama, there were considerably more than just three.

When I got back to Miami and heard the other side of the story from the brother who'd been the architect and the liaison for those moves, I knew I'd been hoodwinked. It wasn't really clear to me how I'd even gotten into the middle of it, but I was sure I didn't want anything to do with that kind of controversy. Especially one about which I knew absolutely nothing. The decline and shameful demise of what had once appeared so majestic was slow and painful.

Keith tried to maintain the social position he'd carved out, primarily the result of mammoth infusions of U.S. dollars for many years. The high life. He married a beautiful young society girl and put on a lavishly gaudy wedding celebration. It was all covered in "The Gleaner", Jamaica's most prominent newspaper. That was a real status symbol among the island's hoity-toity, of which Keith was striving hard to be a part. But some things money can't buy. The aspirations of a small-time Jamaican hustler. He was a common crook underneath the facade, and a real scoundrel, though we'd known him and lived with him for years. He had always seemed so confident and so determined to revive his people. He was charismatic to the extreme.

Every position and every function within the Church's structure was ultimately put in place by Keith. The roles of Wally, Dougie, Kootman and virtually every other vocation in the drama were all orchestrated by the same. Tommy was Brother Louv because Keith sanctioned it. The Chief was the Chief by Keith's design. But the tentacles of avarice, malice and crime enveloped him. Things had changed. At least in my perception. An old Native American proverb: "Never follow a leader who is more in love with power than people." The "Bone" was a distant wisp of bygone faith, our hope for goodness and fellowship. Instead, gunmen and opportunists became their disciples. Alan says as much in his podcast, depending how one reads between the lines. A few years after Keith died, Alan had to get his ass out of town. He chose South Africa. They rented out the airstrip on the rice farm to cocaine traffickers, and eventually got lured in by the "Caesar" themselves. The money. Cocaine cowboys wearing sandals instead of boots.

In 1984 Keith got shot at a gas station he owned on Halfway Tree Road. It had been a straight-out assassination attempt. Brother Patrick White, who was with Keith the day he was targeted, gave me his eyewitness account. Keith survived, but never quite recovered, and died in 1986 of lung cancer. There were other versions of the cause of his death, but any way you call it, he was dead. He had begun using substantial amounts of cocaine before his end. Medicinal? Yeah, sure. I should be one to talk, though. I've certainly corrupted myself out often enough, but I wasn't the de facto head of the Church continually espousing moral superiority with every breath. Carl had died in the plane crash in 1979. His widow and children were shamefully treated. There's enough blame to go around ... and shame, but she was initially disrespected by Keith. Everyone else just fell into lockstep. Very few, if any, of the brothers or sisters ever received help from Jamaica (read that Keith and Alan) while their prison sentences were being served for performing their duties with blind dedication. Ball-washing stupidity, actually. I can't leave that out. We had momentarily been touched by something very special. We thought we had it ... but whatever it was had gotten away from us.

Immediately after the plane crash and the death of her husband, Keith advised Sister Jayne, with her children, to go live at the Church encampment in St. Thomas, Jamaica. That place was Wally's private little torture chamber. Everyone there had to subliminally pledge their fealty to him daily. Wisely, Jayne refused to go and was, effectively, ostracized. The house at 9450 S.W. 120th Street, the one that Carl had been preparing for his family, was placed into escrow for Art Tifford, one of the bevy of scavenger attorneys feasting on the remains of the Coptic Church. The comfortable house was located in the center of a 2 1/2-acre mango and avocado grove. There was a tall, wooden privacy fence surrounding the whole property. Nice. It ended up as part of Tifford's fee, contingent upon certain litigation being completed. That was why the house had been vacant when I'd gotten out of prison in late 1981. Judy, the kids and I moved in for a

comfortable year or so. Jayne eventually landed on her feet after years of scuffling, no thanks to Carl's brethren. Apparently, his life hadn't been worth enough to merit even minimal support for his family. She's very happy now with her husband and with her life. We had collectively overlooked one of the most basic Christian tenets: "Visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction".

After Keith passed away, there were other sad developments. One of his wives, Phyllis, mother of most of his children, was murdered. Stabbed to death with an icepick at her pretentious home in Beverly Hills. One of their sons, Ian, had been with his mother at the time and suffered the same fate. A short time later, Keith's eldest son, Black David, was thrown off the balcony at that same property and died from his injuries. Defenestration, like Jezebel. Go figure. Judy and I, Brian and Jennifer, Dan too, had all spent years living in proximity with Keith and his family. At Sirgany Drive and Stillwell Road. Mandeville, too. And we had been with them for years, intermingling with them at all the various places where they had lived. Both Phyllis and Keith were respectful of us on a certain level, but our blind devotion to a myth made it easy to deny the obvious duplicity of his flimsy sovereignty. We shared many tumultuous moments during those years. But times change. The Jamaican people always treated me and my family as if we were one with them. We never had any personal conflicts and still cherish many memorable moments and the unforgettable bonds.

Keith continued to surround himself with other new sycophants. No one dared say "the Emperor wears no clothes". Obvious to the world, but completely oblivious to his inner circle of "Yes, Niah" boys and girls. None of them had any clothes on either! The Ethiopian Zion Coptic Church had created hope and pride and purpose for thousands of otherwise despairing islanders. It had been a source of great honor, pride and satisfaction to be part of it. Now, there is no Church, though many might put up a feeble argument otherwise. All the old characters are either dead or dispirited, with few exceptions. And you won't find any new members, because there are none. There will never be another assembly of passionately loyal, altruistic souls whose commitment was both real and unprecedented in the Annals of Ganja History. But the dream had turned into a nightmare.

I know there have been many instances in the Bible where God has worked his will through flawed men and women. Who can fathom God's methods? Not me! I'll try to depict one of the many scenarios which may lend some perspective into our blind obeisance to Keith's persona. We were living at Sirgany Drive, in Kingston, in very cramped quarters, moving small amounts of ganja through the airports to pay the bills. It was late, 1973. We were having afternoon prayer, reciting Psalms and reading from scripture, which was a daily observance. The crowd was small and devout, as usual. Out of nowhere, Phyllis, Keith's

wife, came up behind him and shattered an empty glass bottle about the size of a rum bottle over Keith's head and neck. And she was screeching. When an irate Jamaican woman starts screeching, sometimes it's difficult to understand exactly what is being said. But she was pissed! After a heated scene of blood clots and Rasclots, and some grappling, the reason for the drama became a bit more clear to the stunned observers. Phyllis was accusing Keith of fucking Pee, Phyllis's younger sister by more than 10 years. In her bed! Pee was 14 years old at the time. At first it seemed impossible. But Keith didn't deny it.

When the dust settled and the broken glass had been cleaned up, Keith made it plain what had actually happened. It was the fulfillment of prophecy! Jacob of the Bible, who had taken two sisters, Rachel and Leah, as his wives, was the scriptural precedent for his behavior. Of course! Why hadn't we seen it? It was the prophet cutting his losses! Nobody, and I mean nobody, questioned the fulfillment of the prophecy, right before our very eyes. Meanwhile, at that same time the white brothers and sisters were living celibate lives for long periods of time, under the pretense of subduing the lust of the flesh. We tried to strictly follow Levitical laws to justify our madness. Those same laws, or our interpretation of them, did not apply to Keith, though, just us. That was the unspoken mindset of the white folks.

I cannot unsee the things I saw, nor unhear the things I heard, nor can I dismiss the passion of the emotions that I experienced during my two three-weeks stays in Papine, St. Andrew, Jamaica when Ivy was alive. That was what initially captivated my consciousness. A natural awareness of unfolding biblical characters and ancient events in this dispensation. Like nothing I had ever even imagined. There was a tumultuous span of several months when no one associated with our story knew which way it was up. After Ivy's death, Keith inherently took up the mantle of the foundation Ivy had begotten. So it seemed. As we devolved, Keith's confidence and charisma grew exponentially. somewhat in accordance with the previously unimaginable riches from the ganja business. Keith believed himself to be the anointed one, and we all believed it, too. There was scriptural evidence to justify all of our fervent beliefs and actions. At least that's how we saw it.

Apple may have gotten away clean, but very few others did. And even that clean has a strong stench of excrement in the air surrounding it. He had gotten out while the gittin' was still good. Has anyone, at any time or in any place, ever seen or heard Apple laugh out loud? The whole conglomerate turned out to be a disgrace to the memory of something once so vibrant, and so liberating. When Apple disappeared to South Africa a couple of years after Keith's death, many of the properties, especially Coptic Heights, became the objects of controversy. Dozens of gravelicious hangers-on fought for possession or ownership of the skeletal remains of the Church properties, none of whom had ever lifted a finger in the arduous climb to

recognition and prominence. They're still quarreling over the bones. But the "Bone" had long been forgotten, cast aside to the dogs. Brother Dougie actually went to court once, disputing ownership of one of the properties with a few of the never-weres. Ugly. I believe some things are eternal. The E.Z.C.C. is just not one of them. Subjugation to an ideology, or to another man's whims, could never portend freedom. Communism does not work.

For there to be a counterfeit though, there must be, or must have been, a real. The genuine article.

29 Jefferson County

My family stayed at Jayne's house in Perrine through most of the court proceedings in Miami. My focus at the time had been reduced to smuggling a little herb into the brethren, many of whom had gotten locked up right after sentencing. I remember making up dozens of balloons for that little scheme. "Balloons" was the parlance we used to describe the method employed for such a maneuver. Which was to get some of our sacrament inside Satan's Playhouse for the brothers to smoke. It seemed like a very important mission. I'd wrap spherical, marble-size smidgens of pressed ganja in stretch-wrap cellophane. That sealed the morsel. Then I'd slip the tasty tidbit into a couple of layers of latex-glove fingertips tied off to complete the process. A few sisters, whose significant others had been marched off in handcuffs after the trial, carried out the assignment. The brothers would then swallow the treasured orbs while in the visiting room. Later, back in their cells, they'd poop out the pellets, fish them out of the dookie, rinse them off, say a Psalm and fire one up for old-time's sake. It was some good shit! And completing the task had always been a cause for great jubilation. The herb helped deaden the pain, but it couldn't relieve the heart-wrenching disappointment. Their situation was nowhere near what any of us had bargained for, but at least it was a temporary ablution for the soul. Not much of a consolation. They were still locked up.

In early 1983, Judy and I moved our family north to the farm near Lloyd, Florida, the place we'd used as a stash after the washout at the Ranch in Dunnellon. Judy got Jennifer and Dan enrolled in school in Tallahassee. Prior to that, we'd always relied on private tutors and homeschooling, which wasn't all that great. Each day, either Judy or I would make the twice-daily commute into town to deliver them or pick them up from the "House of Learning", a private school off North Monroe. Brian had gotten himself a 3-wheeler ATV, the type which has since been banned, to explore the rural neighborhood and make a few friends. Whenever Kali and Faith (Clifton and Jackie's daughters) came up our way to visit their dad, Brian would thrill them with wild rides over the primitive trails. Initially, Cliff had been designated to the F.C.I.

in Talladega, Alabama, and later he made it to the Tallahassee facility, which was the same security level. Locked up, but not tormented quite as much as at a higher-security-level prison.

Most of the Church members north of Cuba were broke. Imagine that! Scuffle, scuffle. It was not amusing. Brian and I planted several small plots of various exotic sweet herbs. We nurtured them from the collection of treasured seeds Brian had accumulated as a youthful connoisseur. It had always been his M.O. Then and now. The 90+ acres of fallow fields and thick woodland provided an ideal location to pull it off. Brian knew much more about growing ganja than I did, because he'd lived in Jamaica for years among that culture, and he'd lived with brother Billy for a year or so, when Billy had raised a tasty crop of Florida Green. The experience turned out to be very rewarding, not so much financially, but we raised some mighty fine domestic bud.

Our 4th child and newest family member arrived June 11, 1983. Joseph Keith Tranmer. You may have noticed, and rightly so, that we were still staunchly indoctrinated in the Coptic sphere of influence. We still very much revered Brother Keith. Old indoctrinations are difficult to extinguish. As the summer progressed, we spent more and more time fawning over and trimming up our superlative experiment. The annual dioecious plants yielded some very nice flowers. We sold some of it to cover our living expenses, and managed to manicure and package several pounds of the sweet-smelling smoke. It was definitely good stuff. We stashed it in a small cubby hole hidden behind a wall in the master bathroom.

In November, we began seeing and hearing helicopters flying around the area. I-10 was only a short distance away as the crow flies. So we had to hope that they were monitoring the speed of traffic on the Interstate. We were actually aware of the vigorous police surveillance campaign, especially during the harvest months, to locate and destroy any surreptitious marijuana operations in the area. It seemed like they hadn't found our camouflaged agricultural plots concealed in the overgrown field. On November 15, 1983 at midday, the Jefferson County Sheriff's posse, led by plainclothes deputy Mike Joyner, came in on us. There had been a closed gate and a long driveway between the house and the road, but they made short work of those minor inconveniences. They got us red-handed. Me, Judy, Jennifer, Dan and Baby Joe. Brian had taken off into the woods. He knew the place very well, and also knew they would have a difficult time finding him in the thick vegetation. He was 17 years old and not looking to go to jail. The Sheriff's Department, in their lust to rob and destroy the ganja, had failed to get a warrant to search the house. They had a valid warrant for the property, but legally they had no right to enter the house. They could see branches from harvested plants laid out curing inside the huge screened-in porch. There were a few plants in close proximity to the house, which were clearly visible, and they could see several more nice trees inside

the visqueen-covered greenhouse. Technically, the warrant didn't include that building, either. And they wanted to see what was in the house without having to go back to the judge and get the official document authorizing the pillaging. So we had a bargaining chip to negotiate with them. They wanted us to let them inside to search the place in exchange for them promising not to arrest either Judy or Brian. Of course, that was all contingent on them not finding any of the offending herb inside. They needed our permission so they could avoid looking incompetent in front of the judge. I knew I was screwed either way, so we agreed. That was all they needed. Then they took me, handcuffed inside the backseat wire cage of the squad car, off to the county jail.

Jennifer was 15 years old in 1983. She'd heard the cacophony of sounds and the accompanying dialog from her sanctuary inside the house. She'd been around my unwavering madness since her 3rd birthday, so she was aware of police tactics. She heard 'em comin'. Jennifer always had good instincts. As they entered the house with a drug-sniffing canine, she locked herself in the master bathroom and turned on the shower. When they got around to the big bedroom and tried to go into the bathroom, she had innocently put up a fuss. She was taking a shower. Finally, they just blew it off. What could be in there anyway? So when they completed the search of the house, they went outside to ransack the property and destroy any of the offending weed they'd been able to find. The dog had found nothing inside the house, so they had to leave the house and Brian behind..

They had searched the property for the remainder of the day and most of the following day. They'd found almost all the offending crops and eventually stumbled onto the secret underground stashes. The same buried steel vaults like the ones the police had uncovered in Marion County a few years back. Six years, actually, thus conforming to our M.O. from the Ranch. The stashes were concealed under long, low enclosures for the multitude of exotic birds and game fowl that roamed the place by day and roosted in the coops by night. The sheriff's boys had gone nuts when they discovered the secret chambers, but were somewhat disappointed when the only contraband they found inside was a smattering of moldy old seeds from days gone by.

The raid and the bust had made for a headline story in the Tallahassee Democrat the following morning, but it soon fizzled out. They hadn't found that much herb anyway. I think the Democrat said it was 100 pounds, but that would have been all the freshly pulled stalks, many with clumps of earth still clinging to their roots. And even that was exaggerated. By the time it was dried and trimmed, we'd been hoping for another 10 pounds. Brian had stayed in the bush throughout the ordeal, watching them destroy his labor and his expectations. The wicked old ganja weed! The police had given their bull horn to Judy

that first afternoon for her to use to try and coax Brian in from hiding, assuring him the police wouldn't do anything to him. But he stayed out until most of them were gone by the following afternoon. And then he'd come in. Tired, thirsty and hungry. He was 17 years old at the time.

Before the judge that morning, I was charged with manufacturing. That was new for me. I found out that growing marijuana is manufacturing marijuana. Nice! I'd been charged with possession, importation and a bunch of conspiracies-to-do-horrible-things prior to that, but manufacturing was a new one for me. I didn't like being in jail, but I was proud to be a manufacturer. Made in America. I was able to get an esteemed criminal defense lawyer from Tallahassee. My sister, Geraldine, knew somebody, who knew somebody else, who knew Ed Green. My family retained him. He only came to see me twice, but he'd earned his \$25,000 fee when he was able to adjudicate the matter favorably. Ed was smooth. He'd been personal friends with the then-Florida Attorney General, James C. Smith. They were able to work out a compromise which accommodated both parties. The deal my lawyer agreed to was a swap of sorts. We would forfeit the property to the State of Florida in exchange for me accepting a one-year sentence in the county jail instead of an almost-certain 7-year sentence in the State Prison system. The property had been deeded to Rosemary Davis, an alias of one of the sisters. So it had been relatively uncomplicated to sign it over to the State. During Mr. Green's short stint as my attorney, he'd been able to discover several nefarious facts about the case. The cops hadn't just located the illegal crop on their own from the aerial surveillance. No. They'd been tipped off by two anonymous phone calls. Actually, Ed had listened to the tapes of those calls twice and related what he had heard to me. Both phone calls had been the same male voice alerting the cops to the presence of several plots of marijuana flourishing on the property. The Sheriff's Department helicopter had flown over the place twice after the initial call, but hadn't spotted the informant's claim, so they hadn't acted. The ever-vigilant rat had persisted and called them again with more specific information, insisting the weed was indeed growing there. On the next flyover, they spotted something that had looked suspicious enough for them to get a warrant and conduct the raid. Voila! During behind-the-scenes finagling, Ed learned that the farm had been under surveillance from a camera mounted on a telephone pole near the entrance to the place. The spying effort had been a couple of years prior to the 1983 incident, so the place hadn't exactly been pristine. But the cops had soon lost interest and suspended the operation when they'd been unable to witness any activity. Nice to know, though.

I'd had to borrow the money to pay Ed from my parents. Fortunately, I'd been able to pay them back in full when I got rolling again a couple of years later. After the deal had been struck, I was sentenced to one year to be served in the county jail in Monticello, Florida, the county seat. I'd already served several months waiting for the wheels of justice to engage. Brian had been able to take some of the herb that we'd

hidden behind the bathroom wall (thank you, Jennifer) down south, and redeem it for enough cash to hold them over until I got out. And Brian had smuggled a little of the sweet bud in to me in my temporary incarceration (Thank you, Lord, and thank you Brian). Several times during a family visit to the jail, he'd dropped a small parcel of buds into a trash can or thrown it over the fence surrounding the place. From there it was retrieved by Junior, the jailhouse trustee. Junior was a black guy who'd killed his brother in a drunken dispute over something stupid and was serving his sentence in the county jail. Like me.

He saved my ass at least once when I'd become a little careless in my consumption. Again! The old jailer, a long-time local Sheriff's Deputy who'd taken a more age-appropriate assignment, caught a whiff one morning after we'd (myself and a couple other inmates, I was the only white guy) had been burning a pinch of the odiferous goodie. "I smell it! I smell it!" he shouted. Fortunately, he'd been on duty alone. Junior, who'd instinctively been dodging "crackers" his whole life, calmly replied, "It's the Magic, boss. You smellin' the magic." The Magic being white paste he had smeared all over his face to remove whiskers without causing the inevitable bumps from using a razor. The stuff did have a strong smell, like stinky feet. Junior had pulled it off impeccably. Deputy Dog bought his explanation without a second thought. In their eyes, Junior was a good Uncle Tom. He could play that part, too, when circumstances required. The whole scene had been a melodramatic reenactment of the antebellum South.

After I finished my sentence for our high-expectation, low-yield experiment, it was time to move on. The Rosemary Davis property belonged to the State of Florida, and we had a reasonable time to vacate. The double-wide home had been auctioned off to the highest bidder, contingent on us moving out. Yep. Time to git.

30 Tallahassee, '84 – '89

We were finished with Jefferson County, and they were finished with us. Jennifer and Dan were attending school in Tallahassee, so it wasn't difficult for us to decide what to do. I found a nice place to rent on Mahan Drive, a stone's throw from Dempsey Mayo Road. It was a big old 2-story Colonial-style house on 6 wooded acres of prime real estate. The surrounding trees and flowering shrubs made a natural barrier from the traffic on Mahan. The driveway circled around a huge, stately live oak laden with Spanish moss. Azaleas, camellias and magnolias dotted the yard. Finding such a place and signing a 1-year lease with the owner, who lived in Miami, was definitely a Godsend for us at the time. A fresh start. A life no longer subjugated to the duplicitous and sadistically-restrictive counterfeit Church, the Coptic. Though we'd been divested of most of our former comforts, we were awakened to a dormant and unfamiliar sense of autonomy. Sometimes it takes a little time to adjust to such a blessing in disguise. Was it freedom? It's difficult to imagine that something so simple and fundamental could be so profound.

About the same time, Judy joined a Weight Watchers program, and the pounds seemed to fall off. In no time, she was svelte and shapely and firm and sexy after so many years of covered tresses and long dresses. The girl had some moxie. She reawakened an irresistible desirability that had stagnated for far too long. She shaved her legs and armpits for the first time in more than a decade. More like 13 years, actually. Perfume, makeup and other previously-forbidden girly stuff covered the bathroom counter. She got as many of the cosmetic products as we could afford to get. She went to a beauty salon and had the long, uncut, straight hair chopped off and styled into a fashionable bob. She reclaimed the beauty and attractiveness that had captured me so many years before. I was rigid with desire. Putting an end to my indecision, I walked into a Sports Clip for a long awaited clip, and quickly shed my Neanderthal persona. And a bunch of hair, too.

After more than a decade of bizarre sexual repression, I was ready to get it on. Judy basked in the natural enchantment of her femininity, having suffocated those impermissible passions under the facade of holiness for far too long. We were poor, but our release from the self-imposed prohibition was exhilarating. I contemplated getting a job, but Nate showed up at my door one sunny afternoon. Just in time, too. It had been good to see him, but even better when he showed me several neatly-wrapped, 5-pound blocks of Jamaican Redbud. Every once in a while, a bloke stumbles onto an exceptional strain of nectar. And that was one of those times. He had the bomb. If it wasn't Lamb's Bread, it should have been. The herb had originated from Churchill. Churchill was a full-blooded Chinese Jamaican. He owned a big family farm in

St. Thomas Parish that bordered on the Coptic Heights Farm at White Horses. And he also owned a trucking company. Initially, he'd made contact with Keith at the Farm and later became a player in the currency-exchange market, which was a very lucrative business at that time because of the droves of Colonial Capitalists trying to get their wealth off the island before the communist-rat-bastard, Michael Manley, nationalized their stuff. Subsequent to that, Churchill had established himself as a virtuoso in the ganja business. Unlike Coptic, Churchill realized the advantages of dealing in quality herb. He specialized in "sweetie", our codeword for the good stuff. Churchill was a good man and a good friend to both me and my family. I'll have more to say about Churchill later.

With some good ganja like that in hand. I needed a place to market it. Iowa, of course! One of my younger brothers, a graduate of the School of Forestry at Iowa State, knew a guy who might know another guy to help me out. Mark drove me up to Cedar Rapids, our childhood home, in his Nissan pickup. Once a few people puffed the pot, it didn't take long to hook up some happy customers. Shazam! The beginnings of a very lucrative business. We slowly worked our way up the ladder, whatever that mythical ladder might be.

After a year or so, we were ready to take another step up. Brian kept the lease going for the place on Mahan Drive and began living there himself. The rest of us moved to a cool rental property on Robin Hood Road. Movin' on up! And the address was oh-so cool. By then, I had several steady connections. For years, actually. I had a very marketable Jamaican sensemilla. The herb was consistent and very good. The people loved it. I couldn't get enough of it, but what I did get sold quickly. The thin, rectangular packages were about 1-inch thick and weighed approximately one pound each. Usually a few grams over. Hey, better over than under. Because of the shape, the street name immediately became the "Bibles". The Bibles were the baddest books on the block all around the Midwest. Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, the Twin Cities and the Quad Cities. Nobody complained. Everybody who was somebody wanted a taste. It's nice to be popular in a discrete sort of way. Excellent herb for the longing herbivores. The business thrived, and we thrived on our new found freedom. Occasionally, Jackie and the girls had come up our way from South Florida on their way to visit Cliff at prison. They'd stop by our place on their journey, so we'd seen them from time to time, but not Cliff. Sometime in 1986, he was finishing up his sentence. I remember him coming through Tallahassee on his bus ride to Miami. I met him at the Greyhound Bus Station on West Tennessee Street for a cup of coffee. He'd had a short layover there on his way to the halfway house. Later, after I'd learned what his schedule was going to be, I drove down to Miami and tried to help him get it up again.

I started a wholesale telemarketing, cleaning products company, mimicking my friend Ronnie's operation. It was mostly just a feasible front. Jennifer transferred to Leon High, which was a huge step up for her social and academic standing in Tallahassee. She fit right in. My parents, Big Zack and Margaret, moved to Florida in 1986. It was nice having them close enough so that we could all visit regularly and kick the bobo. Good memories. They're good for the soul. That prolonged stretch in Tallahassee was about as good as life got for us as a family. Smooth sailin'. We often spent long weekends in Panama City Beach, a family favorite. White sandy beaches, warm Gulf waters and carefree days in the sun. Judy and I went down to Jamaica in '88 for a vacation of leisure and nostalgia, frolicking in the sun for the very first time on the tropical island paradise.

Eventually, we bought Judy's dream house on 3.02 acres of complete privacy off Thomasville Road. 6110 Old Water Oak Road. Everything about the place fulfilled our most extravagant expectations. We were proud of it and pleased every time we were able to disappear into the welcoming seclusion of the "Big House", an expression we always used to describe the place and our good fortune. Jennifer had space of her own. Her own boudoir on the 3rd floor, the entire 3rd floor, of the peaked-roof house. All that to go along with her new, white Honda Prelude. There's plenty of good to be said about affluence, as opposed to something less prosperous.

My parents celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in the summer of 1987. Various members of the Tranmer Family rented an entire retreat, Marawaraden Resort, on the western shore of Long Lake, Wisconsin, for a solid week over the 4th of July holiday. We had food catered in for two meals a day, breakfast and dinner. There was boating, swimming, fishing, water skiing, fireworks, card games and boisterous reveling. Family, friends, extended family and extended friends. Hundreds of people celebrated the memorable milestone. There were pranks and many spontaneous belly laughs, antics we had eschewed during our long and unrealistic efforts to achieve idealism. Good times and good company. Our regalia for the family celebration were bright gold T-shirts with caricatures of the beloved guests of honor emblazoned across the fronts. "Tranmerica" was printed out in large lettering. We all got to see or meet relatives we hadn't seen for a long time, had never met before, or in many cases, would never see again. But we usually don't realize those uncertainties as they unfold. When the week ended, everyone went their own ways. I'm grateful for that time we shared together.

Back in Tallahassee, our lives were good. Brian bought a house on Sonnet Drive, a nice middle-class neighborhood in the '80s. He was prospering, and a few beautiful young ladies intersected his orbit. He made two separate ganja moves with Felix, a Puerto Rican former-Coptic brother who'd become

independent by doing his own thing. Once they made it through a violent storm in the Gulf of Mexico and only survived after a little help from the Divine. And Churchill was making a name for himself throughout that same timeframe, too. A little here, a little there.

Jennifer graduated high school and moved on to Tallahassee Community College, which has since been renamed: Tallahassee State University. Dan moved on to Leon High School, and Joe started school for the first time at a private Montessori School. All seemed well. But I had often tended toward doing something ridiculously unfathomable when life was the least complicated. I had priors.

In late 1988, I was moving a little herb up around Chicago. I stopped by to see Bobby and Sarah. Bobby was working for Howard. They lived in a cozy neighborhood of Highland Park, Illinois. Howie had a painting and drywall business in Chicago. He'd started it from scratch sometime after being run off by the Church when the Ranch was still a vibrant cog in our import operation. He'd connected with an old friend and former fraternity brother of his who'd established a niche for himself in the Windy City political machine. Through the Democrat Party framework, Howie was able to get some lucrative contracts, patching up and repainting many of the federally-subsidized housing projects as the old tenants moved out and new ones moved in. He built it up to a thriving business, more than 10 years after his abrupt heave-ho from Coptic at the Ranch. Bobby and Sarah both told me he'd gone over the edge again. They said he was holed up in an apartment, away from Claudia and the kids, and he was talking big shit. He was saying Psalms again, trying to reawaken the phenomenon we had witnessed and embraced with Ivy at Papine in 1971. Holy crap! I'd been through, and participated in, enough misguided mischief with Howard during his 6-year run with the Coptics to know that he'd been cut from a unique and very singular mold. And he wasn't a stranger to bouts of madness, which was how he'd often been perceived by the brothers and sisters. As being stark raving mad.

I went to his apartment; for what I can't say. When I saw him, he'd obviously undergone some kind of a transformation. His priorities had changed dramatically. He was trying to resurrect that elusive Spirit, the one we both knew existed. After we'd reasoned a while, we resolutely said the Psalms. I left him a little herb and hit the road back to Florida. I was mulling over all the things we'd talked over. Why did I even give a damn? But I was stoked.

Some time passed and I was still tweaking. I was in touch with Howard by phone occasionally. No cell phones. He told me he'd be coming down to South Florida for various reasons, one of which was his family had a place in North Beach. And his mother was there for a stay. I drove down south from

Tallahassee and met him at his mother's condo. She was there with Howie's sister-in-law. Both ladies knew that he was talking and acting in a manner which was very uncomfortable for them. And there I was, appearing to egg him on at the same time. Howard had a nice wife and four beautiful children, a thriving business with the necessary connections to keep it flourishing for decades to come, and he was driving a Mercedes, which was a definite sign of prosperity among North Beach snowbirds. He was talking that crazy, spiritual crap again. They thought he'd outgrown that kind of nonsense years ago. Common sense reasoning had no effect. That short scene with two Mrs. Rosenbaums was the beginning of a memorable odyssey for both Howard and myself.

We left North Beach in search of Big Bob. He had a place in Homestead, Florida where he was living with his son, Big Dan, selling small quantities of delicious herb to the grateful local potheads. He was known around the area as "Coptic Bob" because of his incessant evangelism and his turbulent history with the Church, which had its own turbulent past before its infamous demise. During his more than a decade stay in the Homestead area, Bob had been held up, tied up, pistol whipped and robbed at various times, but he'd always managed to maintain his herb business. Persistent, if nothing else. Big Bob loved the herb. That was enough motivation to carry him through the battlefield.

He'd been a dog handler in Vietnam, securing the perimeter of his company's position at night. He'd had to fire at shadowy figures several times, but never knew for certain if he'd actually hit one of them. The Viet Cong dragged off their casualties. But Bob always felt the guilt of a probable murder on his conscience. That's one of the effects of war. Anyway, it didn't take long for Big Bob to join the band, like in "The Blues Brothers". We were on a mission from God. Get the old band back together. But instead of the Catholic home where those guys had grown up, we were intent on saving what we considered to be the real Church. The one that we had known in Papine with Ivy, not the counterfeit which we had also experienced. That was our mission.

We spent a few days down around Homestead, seeing a few of the old brethren (Brad, Red Beard, Nate) with our animated message. The message: Keith and Wally were scandalous imposters who'd really taken the majesty of grace and dignity, and slogged it through the pig pen. Very few of Keith's old cronies would give us the time of day, but we were certain that we already knew what time it was. That House of Cards couldn't withstand even a run-of-the-mill blast of flatulence.

Four of us (Brad, Big Bob, Howie and me) took off for Iowa. We headed for Harry's place near Des Moines. We planned to see both Harry and Chuck and whoever else may be in the vicinity. Brad and Big

Bob were in one car, Howard and I in another. I had a couple pounds of good smoke in the trunk so we wouldn't run out. We stopped by Gil and Nancy's place near Dunnellon for a few hours and completely freaked them out with our behavior and line of reasoning. Then we stopped in Tallahassee at Brian's house and spent the night. Brian hadn't been exactly thrilled with our behavior either. Back on the road again when the sun rose high. We were cruising along, saying Psalms, singing, reveling in our reawakened consciousness. Somewhere in Kentucky, Howie and I really went overboard with our premise. Soon we were denouncing money and all the corruption we attributed to its power and influence over mankind's spirituality. Before long, we were divesting ourselves of "Caesar", the green stuff. First, a few bills from out of our pocket-change went out the window, at about 75 mph. Eventually, as the psychosis intensified, I threw several thousand dollars, mostly hundreds, out the window. It looked like leaves being scattered by a blower. In retrospect, it seems so insane ... because it really was insane. Madness that somehow seemed spiritual to us. Damn ... I could use a couple grand in cash about now.

We stopped in Peoria and got two motel rooms. We said some Psalms and burned a few pipeloads, recounting the flying C-note scene. Bob and Brad had been following right behind us and suspected what it was that was fluttering along the roadside. But the idea was so preposterous that even they had blown it off. Until we told them all the asinine details. I can't say for sure what they thought, but we were all caught up in the moment. Whatever that means? In the morning, we said some Psalms again, got something to eat, and got back on the Interstate. Cruising along, we approached the Quad Cities. Circumventing the congestion, we took I-280, to the south of the cities. Speeding as usual, we came up behind an unmarked Highway Patrol car moving along at the speed limit. I hadn't realized it was a cop until I was beside the guy. I slowed. Our eyes met for a split second, and I knew he was going to stop me. His blue-and-red lights started flashing as he pulled up behind me. I headed for the shoulder of the Interstate.

Of course, Howie and I had been burning it up. The car smelled like a Cheech-mobile, and there was no way to mask it, even though I always kept some cigars handy to conceal the unmistakable aroma. Still, I lit one up as the Illinois Highway Patrolman approached our car. It wouldn't have made any difference anyway, because as soon as I rolled down the window so the cop could see us better, Howard asked in his raspiest croak, "Do you know who I am?" Very surreal.

It didn't take very long for a couple more squad cars to box us in. Before long, they found the herb I had stashed in the trunk. I think I'd actually given them permission to search the car. We were way out there! Howard took on a new persona. It's hard to describe, but one of the things I remember is Howie

laying on the floor as they booked us in, pounding his head against the concrete surface. Figure it out for yourself. Cuckoo's Nest stuff.

I bailed out the next day. \$10,000 cash for the hundred grand bond. Judy made the transaction from Florida through a bondsman down there. She was pissed! I visited Howie for a few minutes through a small hatch in his jailhouse door before I took a cab to the airport. He was still nuts, but definitely leveling out a little bit. He told me his brother was going to bail him out, but had decided to leave him in stir for a few days to chill out. I left some money in his commissary account and bid him adieu. The State of Illinois had confiscated my car, taken my ganja, and charged me 10 Grand for the privilege of spending a night in their county jail. That was not a very profitable exchange.

Big Bob and Brad had gone over to Harry's and told their story, but they all knew that nobody could be that stupid. Well, nobody but Howie and me. Bob and Brad, who had never really hung out together or even associated very much at any level before that mind-boggling excursion, became close and lifelong friends afterward. Who'd have thunk it? Back down in Florida, I was a mess. Mental illness has countless forms and various degrees, yet very real and often permanently debilitating.

31 Arkansas, Brian's Bust

I stumbled around the Big House in Tallahassee for weeks trying to figure out what was going on. One day Howard called me. He'd bought a place in Arkansas. He suggested I join him. Judy was devastated. She knew I was skating on thin ice, but I went anyway. Searcy County, Arkansas was somewhat rustic by most standards at that time. Maybe it still is. About 90 miles north of Little Rock on U.S. Highway 65 sits the inconspicuous little town of Leslie, population around 400. West of Leslie, up Nubbin Hill Road about 10 miles deep into the foothills, Howie had found himself a real isolated retreat. 20 acres of craggy terrain, thick woods and an infinity of tiny seed ticks. A three bedroom house and a separate garage/workshop filled out the property. Howie was alone, but three of his brothers-in-law (Lance, Greg and Rodney) lived about 45 minutes away, east of Leslie, so he wasn't a complete recluse. But close. In the short time he'd been there, the neighbors were already extremely wary of the outsider from Chicago. Howie wasn't one to just go off quietly into the sunset. He could make a scene in a hurry. And he was trying to remind the old brothers and sisters of the line we'd all bought into from the earliest days in Jamaica: "The end is near". But underneath it all, our focus was on shining a little light on the travesty that had operated under the auspices of a Church in Jamaica. We thought our spiritual experience had transformed over time from a vibrant understanding of life to robotic servitude. We'd all participated willingly, but it had happened, nonetheless.

We started having oblation in the morning. Brother Kim, a disciple of Big Bob, showed up one day to join us. We spent hours every day on the phone, contacting as many of the old characters from the Coptic fiasco as we possibly could, proclaiming our recent revelatory understanding. Yuck! It was far less acceptable to most of them than putrid flatulence at a garden party. Still, many scores of people showed up in Arkansas over the next several months. Big Bob drove up from Miami with a vanload and a car full of wandering souls.

Rachel (Laurel Ann Kelch), whom I had never met before then, came over from North Carolina with a contingent of previously-ostracized (by Coptic, of course) sisters and brothers and children. I met Kathy Sharp for the first time. Sister Leslie drove down to Leslie from Wisconsin with members of her family and a few friends. Her oldest daughter (another Rachel) actually delivered her first child in a hospital in Marshall, Arkansas, the county seat, after complications at the house. We bought some registered quarter horses and fenced off a nice pasture area for them. Brother Joel came over from Massachusetts and helped us put up a tall, sturdy pole barn. Albert came up from Miami a couple of times. He rebuilt Howard's Mercedes, which had blown a gasket. Like me. Albert was able to fix the car. Little Carl spent several

months up there with his girlfriend, Cindy, and her toddler son, Jake. Carl swore off marijuana after leaving Arkansas, and I don't think he ever smoked it again, vowing to only smoke again when marijuana would be legal. Instead he became a nationally-known activist for rescheduling and legalizing the mysterious plant. Brian came up for a visit with the raven-haired young lass, Shelly, to bring us some more herb when we started to run low. A local cowboy, Bob Parks, a veteran artillery specialist during the Vietnam War, became a loyal and very helpful friend to Howard, and subsequently to the rest of us.

We built three nice cabins deep in the woods. One was for Big Bob, one was for Howie, and the other was for me. The main house became like a community center. We put up several outhouses on a knoll close to the house to accommodate the multitudes, if they ever showed up, mimicking the old-time gospel camps we'd seen in Jamaica when we'd initially adopted the Doctrine. The Doctrine was fundamentally flawless, but it proved to be impossible for anyone to maintain. "Let your eye be single" had simply been transmuted into moving as much ganja as possible, which many of us loved to do anyway, and then bringing most of the resulting riches back down to Jamaica. Something very precious had diminished along the way. We had some, what I consider to be, very poignant and seemingly significant moments in Arkansas. But it's difficult to determine exactly how significant. Ultimately, psychosis prevailed. Here's a little example. One time we (Big Bob, Howie and me) shaved off every hair on our bodies, including the curly growth on our scrotums, in some kind of convoluted dissent to the myopic Coptic habit of judging people based solely on the length of their hair. Ancient wisdom, supposedly. Anyway, the three of us looked absolutely ridiculous (sort of a Martian-like look) without even an eyebrow. Theological mandates can be rather farcical ... on both sides of the aisle.

We lasted about a year in the Ozark foothills. Eventually, we burned the place down to the ground. Literally! The only things left standing after the scorched-earth disaster were Howie's cabin deep in the woods and the pole barn, which sheltered the horses. That's where the Sheriff's posse found us the next day, after the fire had been extinguished by volunteers. We were arrested and held in the county jail, pending some measurable return to sanity. From there, it was just a matter of time (hours, really) before they connected me to the bond-jumping caper in Moline, Illinois. And the State of Illinois had been determined to come and get me. So I had no bail. They kept me in solitary.

They dropped the charges against Bob first, and later against Howard. There was no evidence of a crime. Accidents happen. And no one had been harmed, no damage to anyone else's property. Before Bob went back to Homestead to try and salvage something from his former life (he told me all this later) he'd gone back to the charred remains of our fantasy farm. He'd stayed there for two days because he'd been

completely broke. He said he'd remembered that I had thrown away several gold coins during our unhinged finale. I'd thrown a handful into the wood-burning stove, and some more into the woods. Big Bob found a few of them in the cooled-down ashes inside the skeletal remains of the stove. It takes about 2000 degrees Fahrenheit to melt gold. The pot-belly's fire hadn't quite reached that temperature, so the coins were pristine. Then he looked around for more outside, but had come up empty. Maybe Bob Parks found some of them. If anybody deserved it, he did. He came to visit me in jail at least once, and I signed over the ownership papers to my sorrel quarter horse, "Red". She was a 2-year-old filly and as remarkable as Seabiscuit. At least I knew Parks would take good care of her.

I spent almost two months in the Arkansas jail before a couple of plainclothes cops drove down from Moline, Illinois to fetch me. After the long ride back, and plenty of conversation, they couldn't figure out why I'd been flagged as being high risk. I had the escape from Federal Prison, a couple bail-jumping convictions, and the most recent wacko behavior in Searcy County, but there was no violence anywhere in my record. Except for the ganja charges, I was quite harmless. I had to spend a few months in the Moline Jail awaiting a court date for the three pounds they'd found in my trunk. And for absconding from the bail. Apparently, my lawyer found a way to foil the State's attempt to have my bond forfeited. So he had 10 Grand to work with for his fee. Some of those guys have a real racket going on.

In the end, I was sentenced to three years in the Illinois State Prison, of which I would have to serve 15 months when the generous good time was figured in. About five of those months had already been served. Then I was transported through the infamous old Joliet Prison, the one that was featured in "The Blues Brothers" movie, to a clean, relatively new facility in Jacksonville, Illinois. The medium-security prison there sold civilian clothes on the commissary to inmates, and we were allowed to wear them daily instead of the prison garb. Things were looking up. In all prisons, inmates are required to have a job, no matter how menial it may seem. Luckily, they assigned me to the Art Department, which was supervised by a very affable, local country lady named Rose Sheeley. As a rehabilitation program for the inmates, Rose had set up a bi-monthly newspaper staffed by jailbirds. After one month, she made me the editor. It was a prestigious job for prison and suited me just fine. I featured articles on jailhouse nonsense: the sporting events, the card tournaments and the board game championships. The hooligans loved it. They began anxiously awaiting for the next issue to appear on their bunks every other Friday to see if their names appeared in print. Many of them sent the Jacksonville Bullet home to mom. Hey, always happy to bring a little joy.

When I was released, I had a long bus ride back to Tallahassee, where Judy and the kids were trying to maintain some semblance of a civilized existence. Brian picked me up at the bus station. He was actually prospering quite well. He had a nice business going, a beautiful young Florida girl, and together, they had a very private place west of town. I was on probation, which Illinois had transferred to Florida so I could live with my family. I needed a job to fulfill the requirements of my probation. An old friend, Stuart Reese, and his lovely wife, Robin, helped me out. Stu was a subcontractor for another friend of ours, Jesse Merritt, and his devoted wife, Donna. They built high-end spec houses around Tallahassee. My job as a carpenter's helper fit the bill perfectly. My parole officer, Ernetta Roberts, treated me very fairly. She was from the Virgin Islands, so we always had enjoyable conversations based on her life growing up and my experiences in Jamaica. Ernetta actually testified for the defense at my trial in 1994. She was a very nice and very empathetic lady.

Later, I went down to Miami to see a few of the old characters. Big Bob gave me \$2,000 cash and explained that it wasn't charity, but actually the value of the gold coins he'd retrieved from the ashes, which had helped him get his life restarted. Gold was only worth \$400 an ounce back then. Big Bob had a conscience. He was a good guy, but he was still as crazy as ever, holed up in an old farmhouse on Krome Avenue with his son, Big Dan. Churchill fronted me a 10-pound chunk of extremely sweet, extremely potent redbud to help me get going again after my volatile midlife crisis in Arkansas. He and Brian were in the midst of working out the details for a boat move up from Jamaica.

During my leave of irrationality far from reality, Brian had established a thriving marijuana business of his own. He'd serviced some of my former customers and made many new ones of his own, both in Florida and various other areas. As a reasonable explanation for their livelihood, Brian and his exquisitely beautiful, artistic young fiancée, Lori, had a small T-shirt business going. She would design the unique, colorful shirts, make them on a big T-shirt press in their home and then market them in Panama City Beach. I tried to push up into the smuggling plans, but Brian kept me at arm's length, trying to protect me from myself. I was on paper (parole), and I had to have a steady job to fulfill those obligations. Sometimes a representative from the probation office would stop by our work site to make sure I was on the job. I always was. I was selling small amounts of the good stuff to fellow workers and a few other acquaintances. The pungent bud became known as "Jamaican Bacon" among the select few who were fortunate enough to have sampled its transitional delights.

Brian and Lori drove out to California with Churchill to iron out some of the wrinkles in their plans. By August, 1991 they were ready to go. They had formed an L.L.C. in New Orleans and bought a nice

trawler for the run, having it refitted over a period of weeks in Panama City. Joe Knowles, the uncle of one of Brian's friends, Scott Trammel, was a seasoned fishing boat captain. A deal was worked out. The crew consisted of Joe as the captain, Chris Duhanes (Joe's scandalous cohort, first mate and helper), Steve (who was my nephew and Brian's first cousin), Lori and Brian. On the way down to Jamaica, they had to come in at Naples for mechanical repairs and some parts. I wired \$2,500 down to them through Western Union. After repairs, they were on their way again. No problems the rest of the way. They loaded up 5000 pounds in Port Antonio. The Jamaican Customs (on the take) made sure everything went well.

The crew had smooth seas and gentle breezes on the return trip, but the curtain came down when they were offloading late at night at a darkened pier in Panama City Beach. The working party (arranged by Joe Knowles), who were hired to stack the color-coded packages in the U-haul truck, turned out to be the cops. Joe Knowles had been working with the D.E.A. As the kerfuffle unfolded, the Federal Agents, posing as smugglers, tried to hijack the load after it had been stacked into the truck. They said they were going to hold it until someone came up with their ransom demands. A million bucks! Brian wasn't having any of that crap. The next scene was all recorded on a hidden camera by the cops. Brian told Lori to pass him his pistol, which she had secreted in her waistband. Brian grabbed it and went to the passenger side of the truck cab. Three D.E.A. agents were poised on the bench seat of the 20-foot rental vehicle talking big shit. Brian put the gun to the head of the closest agent, still thinking the thugs were thieves, instead of their true role as government-sanctioned marauders. The other two bailed out the driver's side. Quick! Brian wasn't going to let the would-be rogues just take his things without some kind of resistance. But by then, Brian McLaurin, the lead D.E.A. agent running the show for our opponents, snuck up behind Brian and put a gun to his head.

"Police!" he shouted. "Dropped the gun! Police!" That was when Brian first became aware of what time it was. The jig was up. Brian dropped his gun and laid face down in the sand. And that's where the film, which Judy and I later saw as part of the Government's discovery against Brian, ended. But the action didn't stop just because the camera did. Once Brian was disarmed and cuffed, they proceeded to beat the shit out of him. Punches, kicks and various other roughneck tactics came his way as they tried to get him to give up someone or something. Notably some cash. His shoulder was dislocated and his face had been turned into hamburger. We are not the kind of people who throw down on police. Not even close. Brian thought those guys were robbers, but they were really just thieves. They had set the scenario, and he had taken the bait. Brian's shoulder never healed completely, and it has always been susceptible to coming out of place whenever he puts too much strain on it. His face healed.

Brian's one phone call that night was to his mother. Judy went over to Panama City the next morning for his initial court appearance. I was on probation and needed permission from Ernetta to leave Leon County, so I couldn't go. Judy never forgot the sight of her son shackled hand and foot, his right arm in a makeshift sling, and his face mangled almost beyond recognition as he stood there before the judge. We are aware that we were breaking the law, and the fact that Brian had pulled a gun on the cops not knowing their true identity. They had insisted upon the charade and had even encouraged him (through Joe Knowles) to bring a gun on the voyage. But once they'd subdued him, the other behavior wasn't really necessary. Yet it happened. Whatever aggressions they may have been harboring, for whatever reasons, were taken out on Brian's face.

Lawyer Mike, our old friend from Coptic days, represented Brian. There really wasn't anything that could be done in the courtroom. Everyone else involved in the case had flipped on Brian, and they had the film of the gun-to-the-head sequence. So the only thing Lawyer Mike could do was to negotiate a plea. He tried to get his client the least amount of time under the relatively new, minimum-mandatory Federal statutes in exchange for a "Guilty" plea. The government is always looking for a plea bargain. That's how most cases are resolved. "I fought the law, and the law won!"

After months in Bay County Jail, a date was set for the plea, and then the sentencing. Prior to the court appearance, the D.E.A. tried to get Brian to give up somebody in exchange for a less severe sentence. Of course (and you'd have to know Brian to know this), he refused. Judy and I drove over to Pensacola for his court date. He appeared before Judge Roger Vinson, who accepted his guilty plea and the explanation that Lawyer Mike gave them. Brian had been raised in a marijuana-smoking Church, and hoped the judge would consider that fact when he sentenced him. After a fatherly scolding, the Judge, who was considered by some to be the most lenient on the Northern District of Florida's bench, sentenced him. The minimum-mandatory sentence for 5000 pounds of weed was 10 years. That translates to 120 months. The minimum-mandatory sentence for the gun charge (possession of a firearm in the commission of a felony) was five years, which is 60 months. By law, those sentences had to run consecutively. Serve the second one after the first had been completed. So it was 180 months altogether. Judge Vincent magnanimously sentenced him to 184 months. It was considered to be very lenient. We were thankful. How can you be thankful for a fifteen-year prison sentence? But we were. After the courtroom pageantry, Judy and I walked out into the courthouse rotunda. I saw D.E.A. Lead Agent Brian McLaurin. I walked up to him and sincerely told him, "Thank you for not killing Brian." "We didn't have to," he replied matter-of-factly. But he still had his sights set on me.

When the grand jury had convened in Tallahassee after the initial arrests, the Federal Prosecutor tried to have both Churchill and me added to the indictment, but the evidence had not been enough to do it then. I had prepared myself just in case they were going to arrest me. I'd swallowed several balloons filled with "Jamaican Bacon", so at least I'd have a little something to puff on in jail if they got me. Fortunately, I didn't need those just yet.

The wheels of justice were turning, albeit slowly. Brian went into the Federal Prison System and was transported via bus and on board the real Con Air (Justice Prisoner and Alien Transportation System [JPATS]), which is managed by the U.S. Marshal Service. Those conveyances carried him to McKean, Pennsylvania, which was a relatively new medium-security federal prison. He spent a few days in the old Atlanta U.S. Penitentiary along the way. That was the beginning of Brian's long Bureau of Prisons odyssey.

32 1993 and Treasure Trove

Brian was in Federal Prison. He was 25 years old and looking at 13+ years, after good-time had been calculated into the equation. At the same time, I had to do some fancy footwork to avoid violating my probation from Illinois. Judy and I made plans to go visit Brian. Since it would be the only time we would all be able to see him, we decided to take the family up there. Jennifer, Dan, Joe, Judy and I boarded a flight to Buffalo, New York, which is about 90 miles north of the McKean F.C.I.. We had it planned over the long Memorial Day Weekend. From there, we rented a car and drove to Olean, New York. We got a couple of motel rooms, and then went to the prison for a short visit. Brian had adapted reasonably well. His case had some notoriety, and he wasn't a rat. Those things matter in prison. And coming from the unusual background he had (living in Jamaica for many years and being an herb man at such a young age) made him acceptable to the black guys (for the most part), and his natural skin tone made him acceptable to the white boys (for the most part). Prison is extremely and inherently racist. Everybody hates everybody equally. And Brian had money on his commissary account. That in itself is another gauge in the smug prison hierarchy. It truly made a difference.

We stayed in Olean for the long weekend. Because we'd flown up there and we really didn't have any familiarity with the circumstances or the procedures, we were traveling without herb. I intended to smuggle some "sweetie" in for Brian, and he really wanted me to do it. On that particular aspect of our lives, we were totally in sync. We visited Brian a couple of times to get the feel of it, and then caught our return flight to Tallahassee. I spent a couple of weeks in town to get everything in order. I had to go see Ernetta and take a urine test, which was part of the probation protocol. I had to pay some bills, work for a week or so at my job (my friends were always quite helpful in assisting me to overcome the obstacles I'd managed to place in my own path), and then I planned to go see Brian again.

In August, 1992, Hurricane Andrew hit Florida just south of Miami, ripping straight through Homestead with sustained winds close to 150 mph, leaving total devastation in its wake. Judy, Dan, Joe and I had been at a small get-together of old Coptics out at Cynthia and Nate's place on the north edge of Homestead when it became a certainty that the tropical behemoth was going to make landfall close to Miami. When we'd left their place after the party, we didn't hesitate to make tracks in a northerly direction. The traffic on the Florida Turnpike was bumper to bumper in all the lanes going north, moving at a snail's pace. We were getting close to Tallahassee when Andrew finally made landfall. We saw some of the destruction on the news reports. The next day, I loaded the car up with some essentials and headed back

south. First responders, a long convoy of National Guard vehicles, and a caravan of emergency electrical crews were all trying to make their way into the havoc. I threaded my way through the decimation to Big Bob's place on Krome Avenue, which had been directly in Andrew's path. If you can picture the landscape after a nuclear bomb, that's what I would liken it to be. Bob and his son, Big Dan, had a small, tent-like shelter pieced together in the rubble of a fallen tree. The roof was a tattered tarp held up by splintered branches. A small firepit served as the center of their existence. They had ridden out the storm huddled together in the bathtub as the house blew away from around them. I did what I could to facilitate their survival, and then went looking for Cliff. It was almost impossible to navigate the debris-covered streets, but I finally made it over there. Cliff was hunkered down inside the remains of their home. The front windows had been completely blown out, leaving a gaping opening. Cliff was inside. He had the front door deadbolted against real or imagined intruders. He was clearly in shock. Jackie and the girls had gone to her parents house in Lakeland. After a short while assuring him that it wasn't actually the end of the world, I gave him what money I could and went looking for Nate. Their house had withstood the storm reasonably well, but the roof of the garage was almost gone. Then I went out to Billy's place. It was empty and a mess. I couldn't do much to help any of them immediately. It would take time and patience to rebuild.

Another plan was beginning to formulate after several conversations with Churchill. He and his family had a very nice place out on Long Island, New York. We were exploring the idea of setting up a store in Manhattan to sell the herb in small, small quantities. Grams. That's how they did it in the City. There were plenty of bodegas around the boroughs of New York that sold weed, but it was almost impossible to find the good stuff. Churchill had a nice stash of some very good stuff. So we talked it over on occasion.

Judy, Dan, Joe and I packed up some things for a 2-week tour of the Big Apple, including a nice visit with Brian. We proceeded on an unhurried trip north, through the Smoky Mountains, checked out D.C., then up to Long Island and the Chin Estate. We toured Lower Manhattan, primarily feeling out the situation, looking for a possible storefront where we could set up shop. We dined several times in Chinatown at a few of Churchill's favorite haunts. We either had shark fin soup (which was illegal) or bird nest soup (on some kind of prohibited list, too) with each entree of the exotic cuisine. But we never ordered them at the same time. They were thought to have mythical healing powers. Churchill took us to see a Doctor of Oriental Medicine. After just feeling my pulse for a few seconds, and checking over my vitals, he knew I was a mess. We left the apothecary with a bag of medicinal herbs and curative roots to boil up into a tonic that would somehow, hopefully, counteract the massive corruption which had inundated my body. The good doctor didn't have anything for the soul. Judy vigilantly brewed the mysterious concoction up for me every

day through one complete cycle, but once it ran out, I wasn't about to go back for more. The tonic was god-awful to swallow, but it probably extended my life by a couple of hours, or so.

After a few days exploring "the city that never sleeps", we drove over to see Brian for a couple of days. After an initial visit to feel out the situation, I brought Brian some of our treasured sacrament the very next day. We all sat around in the visiting room snacking from a bag of microwave popcorn as Brian swallowed a handful of the magical balloons, one at a time. We laughed and kicked the bobo with some Jamaicans who were there to visit their incarcerated loved one. They hadn't been privy to the popcorn trick. The inmates did, however, sample some of the resultant droppings later, back in their cells. That, of course, elevated Brian at least 2 rungs up in the jailhouse pecking order. F.C.I. McKean was so laid back that they once put on a Willie Nelson concert for the inmates. The inmates had dubbed it "Dream McKean". The prison grapevine had it that Willie was working off an I.R.S. settlement and the actual rub for the event had come from Gaetano "Corky" Vastola who was doing time there. Vastola was a captain in the DeCavalcante crime family based in New Jersey serving a 20-year sentence for racketeering. When all was well with Brian, we drove up to Niagara Falls for a few days. Dan and Joe had a blast, taking pictures and exploring the famous Falls at Niagara. Overall, we had a nice time. Not honeymoon nice, but nice.

Back in Florida, I started making plans to actually get something going in New York. I had to align my probation obligations to Ernetta with my own objectives. After some whining and begging, she magnanimously granted me a 2-month reprieve from the regular protocol, so I could pursue a business opportunity. Of course, she didn't get all the facts, but she was trying to help me.

Dan and I took off for New York. Once there, we spent many hours walking the streets of Lower Manhattan, checking the vibes, and just trying to get used to the idea of what we were planning to do. The street pillagers pried open the trunk of our car outside our motel room one night as we slept. They didn't get much because we didn't have much, but we knew we'd have to tighten up a bit if we intended to do business in Manhattan. Altogether, I visited Brian five separate times at McKean, four of which I carried the pined-for balloons. A couple of times I sent some balloons to the wife of Brian's celly, and she smuggled them in to her old man, splitting the treasure with Brian.. Having herb like that in prison in 1992 was a big deal. The weed solidified his "player" status and calmed the seas. Each puff would produce a state of euphoria for the puffer. Whatever else may be said about the ganja, it definitely has the unique quality of transcending social, economic, racial, gender, and most any other disparity or grievance that divides us. At least temporarily.

Churchill's brother-in-law, Horace, had a nice house in Hackensack, New Jersey. He and his family were moving to a different spot over in Brooklyn, and they were willing to sublet the Hackensack home to us. That eliminated a huge obstacle. Now we had a place to stay. So Dan and I zeroed in on the East Village. The area was rebounding from years of crime and drug abuse. The City had spent millions of dollars renovating Tompkins Square Park, the centerpiece of the neighborhood. A huge new swimming pool had been put in place, four outdoor basketball courts, a well-kept dog walk and a 6-foot tall, wrought-iron fence surrounding the whole park to keep the homeless out at night. When we got there in late 1992, the area was bustling with an eclectic blend of musicians, artists, actors and models, all close to the epicenter of their ambitions. We soon found the spot we'd been looking for. 125 St. Mark's Place. It was between First Avenue and Avenue A in the Lower Eastside of Manhattan. We could see the Park less than 100 yards to the east, out our front door. Nino's Pizza was on the corner of St. Mark's and Avenue A. Nino was a rugged Albanian businessman. I thought for a long time that he was an Italian, not knowing the proximity and similarity of the two cultures. Nino took shit from no one. Next to him was "Stingy Lulu's", a chic sidewalk cafe specializing in trendy dishes, like calamari. It was owned and operated by three Turkish brothers, who were very good neighbors to us. Then there was our little space, Treasure Trove, an inconspicuous gift shop. Painted on the front window, just under the name of the store in bright red lettering, was an assurance to our customers. "Only the Finest", it proclaimed. Down the street, Alan and Victor (a Jew and a Chinaman, respectively) were counting the paper from their popular vintage clothing store. That was followed by some young Asians selling Hip Hop-style clothing. A foxy Russian gal, Tatiana, worked there most every day. She loved the herb. Beside the popular in-vogue Hip Hop boutique, Candace, a slender, Junoesque African-American beauty, who moonlighted as a United Airlines flight attendant, tended shop. Her husband, Hans, an enterprising German businessman, had set her up in the toney footwear store, "Das Boot". Everyone along the street except Nino and Victor smoked the herb. A few more doors down, Kent and his two lady friends specialized in custom-made, Mad-Hatter top hats. After the "Mad Hatter", there was a series of restaurants as one walked toward First Avenue. There was an Israeli restaurant and an Arab eatery side by side. Never a shot fired. Directly across the street from us was "The Alcatraz", a landmark biker bar. Muhammad had his falafel shop right next door to the motorcycle aficionados. And down the street, the Irish had a funky coffee shop and eatery, "Sine". It was rumored to be tied in with the Irish Republican Army, which was still very active at that time. Our building super was Ricardo Perez, a Salvadorian handyman. He and his Cuban girlfriend, Marta, lived six stories above our shop, and they had easy access to the rooftop. They knew everyone on the street. Ricardo became a trusted friend and confidant. It was a very diverse neck of the woods. Celebrities passed through the neighborhood regularly.

Dan and I secured the place at 278 Marvin Avenue in Hackensack. It was just up the hill from Polifly Road. We could actually see the original World Trade Center towers on the Manhattan skyline from our picture window. There were only two city ordinances that were necessary before a retail establishment could open their doors for business. One was a permit to collect sales tax for the State of New York. The other was verification that a waste management company would pick up our trash twice a week. The tax-collection permit wasn't strictly enforced. The waste-management contract was. Don't bother opening up without one. And there was only one company providing that service in the neighborhood. In fact, in the entire borough of Manhattan. An Italian waste removal company. The word was that the Italians had maintained that monopoly since their heyday. Everything of consequence is negotiated. I got the waste management contract with just a phone call. The tax permit took a while. I had to apply first, and then wait for the bureaucracy to cough it up. Usually it took a few weeks.

So we opened up shop on the 1st of February, 1993. I'd gone down to Philly a few weeks earlier with Churchill, Yvonne, his charming wife, and a few of the kids. We went to a trade show at the Spectrum and ordered all the things we would eventually be selling in the Treasure Trove. On the 26th day of February, 1993, Yvonne and I left the store to run some errands. I was scheduled to pick up my tax permit on Wall Street, and she was going to their bank in Chinatown at the corner of Broadway and Canal Street. I dropped her off first and then picked up my permit. I went back to the bank to pick her up. As she got in the car, we heard police sirens wailing. It sounded major. Within minutes, a cacophony of high-pitched warning alarms filled the air. We could sense it was something big, but didn't really know exactly what it was. We hurried back to the store. That's when Dan told us there had been an explosion at the World Trade Center. The first one, as an omen for the 9-11 catastrophe in 2001. The rest is history. That initial act of terrorism had been perpetrated by the "Blind Sheikh" and his crew of America-hating murderers operating out of New Jersey.

The store on St. Mark's Place became more and more popular as word spread around. The unpretentious gift shop next to Lulu's had the "bomb", street terminology for very good marijuana. The customers immediately tagged the fragrant weed with the exotic handle "Chocolate Thai", a name synonymous with rare quality weed. But it was really sweet, aged Jamaican Redbud. People didn't really want to hear that, though, so we just went along with the Chocolate Thai designation. The voice of the people is the voice of God! Though it was only available in very small quantities, it was the "flavor of the week" for many, many weeks and months in succession. I set up Visa and MasterCard accounts at my bank. Before long, we were selling weed to the plastic cardholders. I'd always make the receipt out for a few cents over or a few cents under, so it wasn't an even 50 bucks, or whatever.

Several friends and relatives came by to check out our little establishment. Two of my siblings, Patrick and Frank, visited us at different times. Rachel and Goeb set up a table out on the sidewalk in front of the store selling various hemp products for a week, or so. Clothing and such. Billy stopped by to get a look at our fledgling enterprise. Things went along smoothly for months. There were street parties almost every weekend, when the weather was nice. Virtuoso musicians looking for their big break often jammed or sang original songs along the trendy East Village thoroughfare. Street artists created Monet-like murals and chalk pastels on the sidewalks and in the streets. The atmosphere was festive and almost always charged with excitement.

Jennifer had come up for a week and got a taste of the cosmic. She told me about her boyfriend, Doug Reynolds. He'd proposed to her and she had accepted. The scene along St. Mark's Place was unique and captivating. We hired two people to work at the store over the summer. Martin Greene, a Vietnam veteran whose face had been horribly burned by napalm in combat, leaving behind a terrifying silhouette. Joe loved him. The two of them played endless hours of make-believe war with an army of Joe's toy soldiers. We always felt comfortable when Joe roamed the bustling East Village with the tall brown-skinned Martin at his side. The other employee was a first-generation Guatemalan beauty, Dominique de Leon. She'd hung around the store for weeks before we hired her. She loved the herb, and boy was she stacked. All the Hispanic cops in the Precinct would come sniffing around the place when the vivacious vixen peddled her curvaceous derriere over to St. Mark's Place on her bicycle. Big Bob came by in September. His visit happened to coincide with the annual "Wigstock Festival", which was held in and around Tompkins Square Park over the Labor Day Weekend. The street scenes were licentiously ludicrous. Mostly men dressed like women, but there was plenty of variety, too. One girl was completely naked, except for the silver paint that covered her body from head to toe, and the high heels, with some kind of oversized, ostrich-feathered, flapper hat on her head. Judy took several photos of her posterior for posterity ... and for me. It was impossible not to feel the ambience.

Judy loved coming in from Hackensack and chillin' out at the store. She made several cool-ass friends from the East Village neighborhood. Not the least of which was Ayumi, a beautiful, young Japanese princess who often took Joe with her as she skittered about the area, enjoying the marvels of the U.S.A. Joe would come in from Hackensack with his mother when he wasn't in school. In the summer, he was there almost everyday. He became the de facto mascot for all the stores up and down St. Mark's. He was the official dog walker for any of the merchants who brought their pets to work. They were glad to have somebody they could trust to walk their dogs at the first-class, fenced-in area of the Park. Joe was a 10-year-old boy. He was loose and running wild in the East Village and loving it.

Judy and I had some awareness of the much-anticipated, outdoor drag festival because we'd heard the tales from our neighbors about the storied weekend event. A young RuPaul was in attendance much of the time, hanging out at the Mad Hatter Store half a block down the street where Kent and his decked-out hat girls conducted business. Anyway, one evening we were sitting around on the bench in front of our store with Big Bob, commenting on the bacchanalian celebrations, which would have made my mother gasp. A dude came along. He was dressed to the nines. Not bad looking by any standard. But Judy and I knew what time was. The babe was a transvestite. Big Bob didn't have a clue. Our new acquaintance struck up a conversation. He wanted to go into the store and look over the merchandise. Judy and I looked at each other for a split second, and without saying a word, we were immediately in cahoots on the potential ruse. Bob offered to accompany the sexy seniorita inside to show her around. Me and the Mrs. were about to piss ourselves up. Someone would really have to know just how disgusting the scene would have been to any of the old Coptics, including Big Bob himself, who would have been at the head of the detractors. All acts of sodomy were worthy of unequivocal condemnation, but there was no reproof for a young man pining for an eligible young maiden. Judy and I giggled like school girls for a few minutes before following the smitten duo into the Treasure Trove. They were get-a-room flirting. It almost seemed like a shame to intercept Cupid's arrow. We diplomatically joined the conversation. Judy engaged the object of Bob's fascination while I took him aside for a minute and clued him in. He was stunned. After the cross-dresser had moved on, Judy and I, and Big Bob too, had some spontaneous fits of laughter, salaciously recounting the hilarious encounter between Bob and the fantasy queen, and what may have happened if Bob had been left to his own devices. That was actually the last time I saw Big Bob in person.

One night, I was in the store alone. Kent, the Mad Hatter, stopped by for a smoke. We stepped into the back room for a couple of quick tokes. When I came out, it appeared we had customers. Two guys came through the front door. One stepped toward us; the other stood by the doorway. Kent was behind me. We had just been burning a bud. As the young Asian man approached the counter, his right hand, still inside the pocket of his jacket, rose up to my eye level. He had cut away the corner of his pocket, and the barrel of a "Saturday Night Special" poked out at me. But it was the middle of the week?!

"Gimme what you got! Gimme the money!" he croaked with a heavy accent. Everything happened fast after that. I turned to the restroom, wondering to myself how much I was going to have to give this son of a bitch to get him to come up off us. Kent, however, had different thoughts. He had heard somewhere that young Asian gang members had been robbing and killing shop owners around the City just to make their bones. Whatever that means? He saw that the other guy standing in the front doorway didn't have a

gun. At least not in sight. In a split second, Kent broke for the door. The Asian guy with the pistol broke out after him. Two shots rang out. By the time I turned back around, it was almost over. Kent had made it to the door where the Asian's accomplice, a Haitian crook as it later turned out to be, had tried to block Kent's escape. Kent had smashed into him with force. The first shot from the 32-caliber handgun had grazed the shooter's leg (the Asian) and lodged in his foot. The second shot hit Kent in the right buttock. It propelled through his quadricep, barely missing the femoral artery. Its momentum stopped as it came out the other side of his thigh and settled inside the pant leg of his jeans. That's where the cops recovered it when things calmed down. There had been several customers at the sidewalk tables in front of Stingy Lulu's when all the drama broke out. They watched in horror. The two would-be robbers high-tailed it around the corner of Avenue A to a waiting van. It screeched off. Two blocks away, the driver of the van broke a red light. A cruiser happened to be right there and pulled them over. The cops found the Asian guy bleeding from a self-inflicted wound in his foot. The slug was still in his shoe. In the back of the van, they found the gun buried in a tub of cat litter. So much for making their bones. When I reached the door, the robbers were gone. Kent was laying sideways on the sidewalk. "He shot me! That son of a bitch shot me in the leg!" he cried out in complete disbelief. Bumbaclot! After I saw the situation was in hand, I quickly took the money and the herb down into a labyrinth of passageways under the buildings. Ricardo had provided me access to them. I hid the objects of the robbery attempt. Weed and cash.

Back at the store, the police wanted to know why someone had targeted our little gift shop. As they collected evidence and questioned witnesses, they actually held an impromptu lineup in front of my store, standing the suspects out on the sidewalk. Then, from the darkness of the Alcatraz Bar across the street, they urged me to identify the gunman. I told them that I knew it had been an Asian guy who had held the gun on me and, ultimately, shot Kent in the ass, but I couldn't say for sure that it was that specific Asian guy standing across the street in handcuffs. And that was the truth. I couldn't. The ambulance took Kent to Mount Sinai Beth Israel Hospital.

When the dust settled, we resumed our ganja business, but that incident had stripped the Treasure Trove of its mom-and-pop innocence. Every bodega selling weed in the boroughs had some kind of security. Usually, it was extreme security. Except for us, of course. Mostly because of me, we were running wide-open stupid. Just step through the door and ask, and a nice morsel of Chocolate Thai would appear. Only the finest!

Sometime in early November, a task force from the 9th Precinct raided our humble establishment. They found very little treasure, but it was enough to run Dan and me into the nearest New York City Police

Department Facility for a 3-hour ritual of fingerprinting and mug shots before they allowed us to bail out. They had pieced together enough probable cause after the robbery to come after us by making several controlled buys from Treasure Trove. The next day, we were back in action, though. Dan would sit on a stoop or on a bench out on the street, and we'd just direct the traffic toward him. After a week or so, we dropped that facade and went back to our wide-open, careless folly.

As Christmas rapidly approached, the task force raided us again, but they only arrested Dan because he'd been the only one from whom they'd been able to make a controlled buy. Before they left with Dan in cuffs, the task force had pulled down the roll-up storefront grilles, and locked it up with their own chain and lock. They also posted a sign citing the Statute and Code that authorized their bully tactics. "Thou shalt not sell marijuana in the City!" We bailed Dan out almost immediately. And we never got back into the store again. All the merchandise that was in there went down the toilet, along with the concept and the reality of the Treasure Trove. Then, within a few days, I learned that Churchill had been arrested at his compound on Long Island. One of his former boat captains had flipped, thus the indictment.

My parents came up to New Jersey from Florida for Christmas. My sister, Theresa, came up there, too, with her son, Jesse. We'd made plans for New Year's Eve. Jennifer was coming up, and we all planned to go into Times Square for a carriage excursion through Central Park. As the plan unfolded, Dan, Joe and I got in the car and drove to Newark Liberty International Airport to meet Jennifer's flight on the evening of December 30, 1993. Watching as Jennifer walked toward us, we waited at the main terminal. As we embraced in the hugs of happy souls, we were surrounded. United States Marshals. A sealed, superseding indictment from the Northern District of Florida in the 11th Circuit had been handed down for my arrest. They hadn't known where I was, so they'd had to improvise. Jennifer traveled as J. Tranmer. They put a bead on her. So when we went for the hug, they went for the jugular.

"James Tranmer!" they shouted. "U.S. Marshals! You're under arrest!" Those guys know how to poop on a party. Off to jail in cuffs. That year December 30th fell on a Thursday. But the 31st was like a holiday. Then it was New Year's Day, followed by Sunday. I didn't get before a judge until Monday, January 3, 1994. I spent those days in a dark, cold cell, alone, with a plastic-covered pillow and a thin blanket. Nothing else. No books, not even an old newspaper. But I did have the Psalms to sustain me. The place was reminiscent of an ancient storybook dungeon. It was also the end of my run. Happy New Year!

Once again, as had been the case many, many times since my self-perceived enlightenment, the Psalms were my refuge and my fortress. In God We Trust.

33 Trial

I was taken before a U.S. Magistrate in New Jersey on January 3. After hearing the government's case against me, the black-robed justice denied bond on the grounds that I was a possible flight risk, and remanded me over to the custody of the U.S. Marshals pending the completion of the necessary paperwork to extradite me to Panama City, Florida, where I would be facing the music. Conspiracy to Import Marijuana, Conspiracy to Possess Marijuana, and Conspiracy to Distribute Marijuana. That's a lot of damn conspiracies! I was a week shy of my 50th birthday. Judy and the boys came to visit me a couple times, but it was clear they were going to have to leave the Garden State behind. As it turned out, a dear family friend, Frelon Hill, unexpectedly came out to Jersey from his family's home in Iowa to assist Judy with her move back to the Hawkeye State. Her options were limited. Frelon was a kind and selfless soul. My brother, Mark, my sister, Theresa, and several other family members and friends helped Judy get re-established in Coralville, Iowa. Her parents lived in Muscatine, Iowa, less than an hour away, and she wanted to be close to them in their twilight years.

It was January, 1994. I was stuck in New Jersey, and the charges against me had been filed in the Northern District of Florida. So the Court would have to go through the necessary procedure to extradite me to Panama City, Florida. Bay County. The mode of travel in the Federal system is somewhat determined by the urgency and the notoriety of a case. I waived extradition and was flown out on a small Lear jet from Teterboro airport. On board was myself, a cocaine/homicide suspect who was headed for justice somewhere in Virginia, the pilot and the co-pilot and three U.S. Marshals. Not very economical, but Uncle Sam has deep pockets. I spent the night in the Norfolk, Virginia jail, and then on to Tallahassee as the only miscreant passenger aboard the little jet.

Two U.S. Marshals drove me over to Panama City from Tallahassee. It was an interesting ride. The Marshall riding shotgun had been the Senior Inspector in the Northern District of Florida. He had juice. Or at least that's what he told me when he offered me a deal. He explained that if I was able to help them locate a certain fugitive, one who topped their list of most-wanted villains, that he would be willing to promise me complete absolution from all of my conspiracy charges. The villain they were after was Bill Blackledge, a fugitive Jamaican/Scot drug baron. Bill was a guy who worked with many of us from the Coptic Church in the late '70s and early '80s. He had started out as a currency exchange connection, but quickly evolved into a key player in the ganja business. His cocaine infamy didn't come until the mid '80s. By then, I was far removed from Keith and the Coptics. Anyway, the Marshals wanted Bill very badly. Somehow, they

figured I knew him (which I did) and possibly knew something about his whereabouts (which I didn't). I hadn't seen Bill since '82. In the interim, he'd become an international luminary among cocaine traffickers. He's still notorious. The one that got away! Wild Bill. They never did catch him.

When I got to the Bay County Jail in Panama City, Churchill was already there. They'd extradited him from Long Island, but they wouldn't put us in the same cellblock, or even on the same floor of the jail. It had been difficult to communicate. We had to pass along messages via the orderlies, which was not the best method, but better than nothing. As time passed, they'd provided us with court-appointed attorneys. I got a guy named Roderick Vereen. Churchill got a lawyer named Christopher Patterson. A trial date was set. As the date drew closer, the B.O.P. transported Brian down to Bay County from the prison in McKean. He was scheduled to be a witness for my defense, so my attorney had subpoenaed him. When he got there, they put him in with Churchill. I must have been considered a leper. A couple of times, they took Churchill and me in the same Marshall's car to the courthouse for pre-trial motions and hearings. One time in particular, the courtroom was empty, except for our little cast of characters. The judge, the U.S. Attorney, a couple of United States Marshals, our attorneys, and us. Cuffed up, of course. But after our procedures were finished, the judge, the prosecutor, and the two attorneys adjudicated the cases of two other defendants that the attorneys represented, who were not even present. Signed, sealed and delivered! The behind-the-scenes machinations had settled the matter. I should have taken note and seen it coming, but it was impossible for me to give up hope, no matter how remote the possibility might seem to be.

From the time I first spoke with my attorney about the case, the centerpiece of my defense was to be the testimony I would give before the Court and the jury. That's what I wanted to do, and Vereen thought that my sincerity regarding the herb, and the flimsy evidence that they might have to possibly implicate me in the conspiracy, would be enough to convince the jury that I was not involved. Just knowing about the alleged conspiracy is not enough for a conviction. The prosecution has to prove that the defendant (me) had been involved in at least one overt act to further the conspiracy (i.e., rent a vehicle, invest some money). Something tangible. And I was set to testify whenever the time came.

In the interim, the press got involved. I personally had never claimed to be a member of anything after my arrest. Somehow, though, they'd gotten in touch with Little Carl. He was living and working in Des Moines, Iowa, where he had become a somewhat notable figure because of his legal battles with both the State of Iowa and the Federal government concerning the status of marijuana. Especially the scheduling of the "plant of renown". Schedule 1 substances included anything with no currently-accepted medical use, and with a high potential for abuse. I don't feel that assessment is even remotely close to the reality

concerning the ganja. But who really cares about feelings? "And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations," If there is such a tree, it is truly the ganja tree.

Anyway, Carl tipped the press about my history with the Church. It was enough for a brisk, several days' news frenzy. One of the media outlets got permission to talk with me on the phone. In the course conversation, I simply remarked that, "If what I have done is so egregious, then they should just sentence me to hang in the public square. My only request in that case is that a hemp rope be used to do it." Of course, I thought that was being clever, but nobody likes a smartass. And at one point in trial, during the testimony of a key prosecution witness, I blurted out, "Stop lying! Why are you lying?" That didn't go over too well. The judge stopped the proceedings and had the bailiff lead the jury into another room. Then, he cleared the courtroom of spectators. He warned me that if there was another outburst like that, he would have me locked in a cell outside the courtroom, and I would have to watch the remainder of the trial remotely, on a TV in the cell. It was difficult at times to restrain my emotions.

That ended the theatrics. Most of the testimony and evidence in the trial was zeroed in on Churchill. Two former boat captains, a real villainous creature nicknamed "Wahoo" (who was a D.E.A. operative), and a few others had made a deal with the Devil to either lighten their own sentences or throw out any charges against them. That's just how it's done. Courtroom proceedings are so well orchestrated that they should pass out awards, like Oscars, Emmys or Golden Globes. I know there must be laws, and the laws must be enforced by whatever means necessary. But the laws against marijuana are errant and unjust. The force and urgency and malice of the prosecution against marijuana suggests it is motivated by some other very secretive and dark forces. And all the campaigns against it have happened just since 1937. The Marijuana Tax Act. Those draconian laws then spread to every nation. Amsterdam decriminalized small amounts (5 grams) in 1976, but Uruguay was the first country to legalize cannabis in 2013. I don't want to live in Uruguay. Nor Amsterdam. I like the U.S.

Brian testified for the defense. He assured the Court that I hadn't had anything to do with the boatload of marijuana. In fact, he explained, he had consciously made an effort to keep me away from the action. I don't know for sure how convincing he may have been, but when the U.S. Attorney asked him if he hated the D.E.A., Brian responded, "Do I hate the D.E.A.? No, I don't hate the D.E.A. I think they do corrupt and greasy things to get another notch on their gun." Very succinct. One of our friends, Robert Lawrence, a local marijuana advocate, snickered aloud at the answer. The judge had him removed from the courtroom, restrained, and locked up until the trial was finished. Let freedom ring!

But the biggest betrayal was yet to come. After all other witnesses had testified, and it was my turn to say something, Roderick Vereen leaned in close to whisper, "I think we got it. I'm not going to put you on the stand." What I remember most is his breath. It was rotten. A real stinkbomb! Maybe the worst I'd ever sniffed at such close range. All my concentration and prayers during my stay in jail had focused on my upcoming testimony on the witness stand. There's some kind of judicial wisdom that professes a defendant should never take the stand in his or her own defense. I didn't care about that. I wanted my day in court. But I reluctantly acquiesced. Another huge mistake on my part. They probably would have convicted me anyway, but I had allowed that skeezy mouthpiece with butt-breath to knock me off track. Many years later, when I was still in prison in 2012, Vereen found his way into the national news, and I saw him again on the evening news. He was representing Trayvon Martin's 16-year-old girlfriend with whom Trayvon had been talking with on the phone at the time of the incident. She remained anonymous because of her age. I hope she survived his halitosis. I can still smell it after more than 30 years, and I cringe. It was sort of a reflection of Vereen's integrity and sincerity. Foul! Little Carl testified for the defense, too, but he was hamstrung by procedural constraints. He couldn't say anything about anything of consequence. Judy and Jennifer were there for the trial. Jennifer was prepared to testify that she had wired Brian the money via Western Union for the boat repairs in Naples, but Vereen never called her to the stand. It was better that way. Ernetta, my parole supervisor for more than a year, did a very nice job validating my stellar behavior during the time of my probation. Thanks, Ernetta.

There was a sequence near the end of the defense's case when Vereen actually appeared to be a courtroom savant. They were trying to determine the actual weight of marijuana that I may have known about, and when I knew about it. That information would determine the category and length of the mandatory sentence his client (me) would get if convicted. Originally, the smugglers had planned to bring 2000 pounds up from Jamaica. As the time to do it drew near, the amount rose incrementally until they finally crammed over 5000 pounds into the fish holds of the trawler with no covering. Make hay while the sun shines. The minimum-mandatory sentence for 2000 pounds was 30 years. For 5000 pounds, the sentence was mandatory life in prison. There is no parole for a life sentence with the Feds. Die in the dungeon. So, Vereen fought like an inspired "legal beagle". Like Matthew McConaughey in "A Time to Kill". But it was all for show. He seemed to have won that round through relentless and wily cross-examination of government witnesses. Why had he saved his courtroom chutzpah until it was too late? It wasn't until much later that I realized the real purpose of his sudden inspiration. He'd already sold me down the river by then, but his performance at that point allowed the judge to give me 30 years instead of life. That way, when Vereen went into private practice, which he intended to do, his stellar reputation would not

be tarnished by having one of his former clients get a life sentence. That's how it goes sometimes, and that's how it went that time. The forces that motivate people can be very insidious.

Once the case rested, the jury didn't take long. When they filed back into the courtroom, it was a done deal for me. Guilty! Guilty! And one not guilty. It had been a split verdict. Guilty for conspiracy to import, guilty for conspiracy to distribute, and not guilty for conspiracy to possess. Churchill was found guilty on all the counts against him. Vereen feigned indignation and insisted the split verdict on the counts against me provided very good grounds for an appeal. He was really very transparent. Later, after my sentencing, he assured me again that we had a good case for appeal. I never saw him again after that. He had failed to tell me that a whole different set of lawyers handled appeals for indigents, like me. We returned to our respective jail cells to await sentencing. The system had to conduct a Pre-Sentence Investigation to determine just how deeply they would sink the knife into a poor schmuck's back. When they'd set a date for the sentencing initially, my P.S.I. had not been completed. That gave Vereen another chance to show his prowess. Which he did, getting the amount of marijuana that I'd known about lowered from 5000 pounds to 2000 pounds. Too little too late. The Judge postponed my sentencing to a later date, but he sentenced Eden Churchill Chin to 270 months in the Federal Bureau of Prisons. That's 22 1/2 years. Take that! That's how they do it.

A few weeks later, they took me back before Judge Collier to get my just desserts. The Judge granted me a moment to speak before passing down the bad news. It had been part of the arrangement between lawyer and judge, but I wasn't aware of that at the time. Here's what I said at my sentencing, "I'm an herb man. I've always been an herb man for more than 30 years. The herb is a sacrament. Ganja is my sacrament. America is a sick nation, spiritually. You cannot win this fight against marijuana. If you fight against the herb, you fight against creation. I will take anything you give me for ganja. You can't take ganja away from the people. Ganja is what is given by God for the people, and you can't take that away from them." It was a short statement, but somehow those words summarized the long battle with the forces who had arbitrarily fabricated a narrative slandering the mysterious substance. Who are these fraudulent creatures? Well, if something or someone is resisting God's creation, then they must be resisting the Will of God, and that can only be Satan and his Legions. But every dog has its day.

The judge hadn't been pleased with my perception of things. "420 months," he said without pause when I'd finished. That translates to 35 years. It was sort of ironic that the number was 420, which is a code of some kind for marijuana users. "Fire one up!" But I didn't learn of that subliminal message until later.

My little speech had earned me an additional five years. The 35 years was 5 years more than my barrister had bargained for. And he said as much in a media interview. Those guys are so full of shit!

I was remanded back to the county jail to wait for the B.O.P. to come and get me. Before Brian Tranmer made his long, punishing journey back to McKean F.C.I., Brian McLaurin, head D.E.A. Agent in North Florida, made one more entreaty to him. Apparently, Joe Knowles, the boat-captain/informant on Brian's smuggling case from Jamaica, had double-crossed the D.E.A. He'd not only gotten the refitted fishing vessel as part of his "30 pieces of silver" reward, but he had also stolen two of the burlap bags full of marijuana before he'd sailed off into the sunset after the bust. And the cops only found out about his theft much later. And another thing. Old Joe had gotten heavily involved in the cocaine market around the Bay Area. The D.E.A. had wanted to neutralize their own out-of-control informant, so they offered Brian a reduction of his sentence if he would testify in court against that total pile of human defecation, Joe Knowles. But that wasn't even an option. Brian wasn't interested. McLaurin would just have to accept his disappointment. No big deal. There was no deal.

Johnny Johnson was a liaison for the U.S. Marshals in Bay County, and he often escorted prisoners from the jail to the courthouse and back again. So he got to know both Churchill and me a little bit. After all was said and done, he gave an interview to the local newspaper, The News Herald. He told the reporter that he didn't agree with what I was saying, and he thought I'd been terribly misled, but he added that he had to respect me for standing up for what I believed. "Most people brought before the Court on drug charges vehemently deny any association with drugs," he said. "And never have I seen anyone sing a drug's praises. But that's exactly what Tranmer did!" And the reporter added that soon after Tranmer gave his impassioned speech, a pelican had crashed into a power line outside the courthouse, dying in a huge fireball as the courthouse went dark. I used to watch the pelicans through the window of my jail cell as they made majestic dives into the Bay for their dinner. Sometime after sentencing, I received a letter from Churchill's attorney, Christopher Patterson. He told me that he respected my stance in the courtroom, that I had stood up for what I believed, though he didn't agree with my message. He is now Circuit Court Judge Patterson. For me, any tiny accolade made my bumpy journey a tiny bit more tolerable.

That was the end of Bay County for me. The U.S. Marshals picked me up for my long engagement with the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

34 Doin' Time, Brian Goes Home

After the trial and the exhausting movements (the long bus rides, flights on ConAir always shackled hand and foot with chains), I arrived at Lewisburg U.S.P. (United States Penitentiary) in late September, 1994. Besides the supermax at ADX Florence, Colorado, the penitentiaries had the highest security level in the B.O.P. Based on the length of my sentence (35 years) and my criminal history (escape and bail-jumping), I was designated to Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. Just try and get away from that old walled monstrosity, which had opened in 1932. A lot of ghosts in that ancient dungeon. The most violent offenders and guys with life sentences ended up in Lewisburg.

When I hit the compound (the general population), I was assigned to E-Block, which was on the least-aggressive side of the massive walled facility. That's me for sure ... least aggressive! Because of my age (I was over 50) I landed in a pretty good spot. E-Annex was a small private addition behind the main E-building set up for older guys. It had been erected many years after the original structure was put together. Private cubicles for each inmate, our own showers and bathrooms, and a separate room with the TV. I didn't realize it at the time, but that set up was pretty good jailhouse accommodations. I got in with some very cool, seasoned old convicts. No snitches or child molesters. In the U.S.P.s, many of the inmates were killers without possibility of parole, so there was really not much of a deterrent for settling any ugly grievances. They'd be in prison until death called, so adding another dead body to their count wouldn't affect their existence.

The media, Hollywood and all the publications that depict jailhouse or prison life invariably portray it according to less-than-accurate perceptions. One of the most often depicted scenarios always has "Big Bubba" bending guys over and expanding their behinds. Rough talk, intimidation and a variety of gang fealties. But under the bluster, prison is just another place on Earth. People living. Many of the inmates are big gossips, like in a women's dormitory at an obscure Midwest college. That's probably disrespectful to those ladies, but the point is: inmates thrive on derogatory scuttlebutt as much as anyone. In the closed environment of incarceration, secrets aren't kept for long. Ultimately, if there is any muck beneath the surface, it is eventually exposed. Homosexuality is considered to be a major fault by most. Not as bad as pedophilia (sex offenders are categorized as cho-mos [child molesters]) or being a rat. Most guys in prison are not giving or receiving, pitching or catching. They're fantasizing. Fortunately, my lovely, sensuous wife, dear Judith Kay, provided me with enough vibrant memories to carry me through the many, many years of celibacy. And she would talk dirty to me on the phone on occasion, which was always thrilling.

The UNICOR factory (that's a prison industry) at Lewisburg made office furniture for federal buildings. It was a metal factory, so there were plenty of homemade knives (shanks) available for any interested parties. Somebody was making fiberglass shivs that could easily pass through the metal detectors. "The House of Knives" was a favorite inmate nickname for the medieval prison. Doing time is never pleasant for an inmate. Hours, days and years lost to oblivion. But the Spirit somehow prevails. Psalms were always a refuge for me. Reading anything available was pleasurable and very comforting. And there were always moments of levity that helped preserve one's sanity. Well, maybe not. My faithful, loving wife, something almost unheard of in the depths of prison's hell, was of great comfort to me.

I was just getting in on a cut-throat (meaning two against one), 3-handed pinochle game (four players, dealer sits out, 5-card kitty, penny-a-point). That was heavy-duty prison gambling and entertainment at the time. My new buddy and fellow card player, Jerry de Geralomo, and I were going out to the rec-yard for a little exercise one evening. Jerry had owned an armored car company in Brooklyn and had schemed to rob it of valuable art pieces and jewelry. Obviously, it hadn't worked. The guy he'd hidden in the vault lifted a few items for himself and ratted out Jerry when he got caught fencing the stuff. Thus, Jerry was in prison with me doing time.

It had to be sometime in October, maybe early November. As we were hitting the track, this guy ran past us. He jumped onto the inside security fence and started going over the chain-link barrier. It was at least 10-feet high, with swirling razor wire at the top. Not too far behind him were half a dozen cops in frenzied pursuit. The big double gate that allowed vehicles through there when open was chained and padlocked. The runner somehow got over the first fence and was heading for the second nearly identical fence by the time the other cops got the keys for the padlock. When they got it open and started streaming through, the runner was scaling the second fence. Tower guards were blaring warnings for the guy to stop, but that was useless. Sirens went off almost simultaneously. He got over the second fence and was running toward the sally port. Three shots rang out, Two from one of the guard towers and one from another. The guy dropped like a sack of potatoes. They rushed to surround the wounded, would-be runaway. We watched in stunned amazement as they loaded him onto a gurney and disappeared into one of the buildings.

We learned later that the runner had been a Jamaican guy whom we'd often seen roaming the corridors with a plastic garbage bag picking up trash. That was his job, a hallway orderly. He'd always been a little off his rocker anyway, mumbling incoherent gibberish to himself as he did his job. Lewisburg had a nut ward, too. C-Block. The M.A.B. Unit. Most aggressive behavior. The guy's psychotropic meds obviously

weren't working properly that particular evening. Still, they dropped him. Only one of the shots had actually hit him. In the shoulder. But it had been enough to take him down. He had never even touched the wall. For the next several weeks or so, the scuttlebutt going around was that the tower guard who'd shot him had gotten himself a buck on opening day of deer season. It was opening day. That's not something you expect to experience. Union County Pennsylvania is 85% white, 6% black, and the rest are mixtures of something else. That was life in Central PA in 1994.

I got a job in UNICOR as a draftsman. Computers were not yet very widely used and never by inmates. So all the spec drawings for the furniture factory were done manually. I had a little aptitude for the occupation from my time in the Army as a map-maker and a few mechanical drawing courses in high school and college, so I moved right into the air-conditioned office space adjoining the plant. It was a cushy job in that prison at that time.

About the same time, our daughter, Jennifer, married Doug Reynolds. December, 1995. My brother, Dr. Patrick Tranmer, gave the bride away in my stead, a gracious deed for which I am eternally grateful. Just about 9 months to the day after the wedding, they gave birth to a cuddly baby girl, Brooke Logan. She was our first grandchild.

In prison, ethnicity determines who you hang with, for the most part. In the chow halls, there were always two serving lines. One primarily white, the other primarily black. Hispanics and other ethnicities blended in. That's just the way it was. There's often some high drama to keep things interesting. In October 1995, spontaneous riots kicked off throughout the B.O.P. because of Congress's refusal to reduce penalties for crack cocaine. The law was seen by many as racist. 84 of the 100 Federal Prisons across the country went on lockdown for weeks. Nothing like that had ever happened before in the B.O.P. In Lewisburg, where I was, I-Block inmates barricaded themselves in their unit and resisted the cops for hours. They devised a homemade bazooka, using a hollow bedpost and pool balls. No shit! Propulsion was somehow achieved using the heads of matches (which were sold on the commissary), and who knows what else? When the guards regained control again, they beat the dog crap out of a lot of those guys, and eventually all of them were transferred to other prisons. There were problems at McKean, too, where Brian was doing his time. He got caught up in the resistance, and when the dust settled, he was deemed to have been in on the drama. He was put into a "Riot Control Program" for more than two years. The inmates placed in that program were from every prison that had resisted in any way. They were systematically transferred from one Special Housing Unit (SHU) to another segregation unit in various prisons around the country. Once, when Brian was being transferred from a prison at Beckley, West Virginia to the U.S.P. at Terre Haute, Indiana on a

prison bus, he was shackled so tightly in the high-security “black box” device that the circulation in his hands was compromised. His hands actually turned purple during the long ride. The cops would do nothing to relieve his discomfort. They had their ways of dealing with anyone they deemed to be a troublemaker. Suffer in silence. Grin and bear it. It took days for his circulation to get back to normal and relieve the discomfort. Brian was the only white guy in the program. Not because he had crack charges, but, because of his Caribbean upbringing, he'd hung out with some of those dudes.

I stayed in Lewisburg for a little more than three years. My father, Big Zack, passed away while I was there. We had a short, heartfelt telephone conversation a few days before he died. Big Zack was a real man. He always took care of his family and never did anything shameful or embarrassing. Never! So I hadn't learned it from him. Then, there was a race riot between the "Dirty White Boys" (a gang subservient in the prison hierarchy to the "Aryan Brotherhood") and the Muslims. Essentially, whites against blacks. The feud had fomented for several years between them, with incidents of fatal violence, back and forth, before culminating in multiple stabbing deaths in August, 1997. The whole place went on lockdown for months. They transferred almost 200 of us (those who hadn't had a disciplinary report for at least 6 months). They flew us to U.S.P. Beaumont, near Houston. Beaumont was a new prison, and they were still filling it up when we got there. They tried to populate the new joint with the least violent inmates from other U.S.P.s: Leavenworth, Terre Haute, Lompoc, Lewisburg. Tranquility in the new joint lasted for less than a year. Joey Mosher, a young white guy whom I had known from Lewisburg and from working with him in the factory B.D.U. (Battle Dress Uniform) at UNICOR, stabbed and killed another white dude named Stan. It was over a gambling debt Stan owed to the "Aryan Brotherhood" poker game. Total madness. Joey was acting as enforcer for the A.B., making his bones. The last I heard about him, he was doing his new life sentence in the supermax ADX Florence, Colorado. He'd always wanted to be a tough guy, and now he's an overweight, middle-aged vegetable doing time.

While I was still in Beaumont, Jennifer and Doug had their second child, a boy, Douglas Scott. He was Judy's and my second grandchild and first grandson.

The security level of a prisoner is determined by his criminal history and the length of his sentence. The B.O.P. has a formula to determine someone's out date, the day they'd be eligible to walk out the gates. That's calculated with all the potential good time subtracted. My out date went under 25 years left to do in December, 1999, so my security level dropped from high to medium. I was slated to be paroled on June, 26 2024. They transferred me to F.C.I. Pekin in Illinois. That was the federal prison closest to Judy's residence in Coralville, Iowa.

Brian had worked his way out of the Riot Control Program after 2 1/2 years, and was subsequently sent to F.C.I. Raybrook in upstate New York. Raybrook was an Olympic Village constructed for the 1980 winter games at Lake Geneva and later converted to a prison when the festivities were finished. After more than two years of good behavior at Raybrook, he was ready to transfer again, something closer to his mother's place. Because of his history as a troublemaker, the B.O.P. started the process to send him all the way out to Victorville, California, which at the time was a new prison being populated by a lot of Hispanic gang members. Not a very sought-after designation. And it was more than 2000 miles from Iowa. Little Carl, who by then had become seriously involved in politics, had actually run for Governor of Iowa once, and for the U.S. Senate once, on some 3rd-party ticket. So, he had some familiarity with the political machinations of bureaucracy. He wrote a letter to then U.S. Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa requesting that Brian be reassigned to F.C.I. Pekin, so he could be with his father. Me. The Democrat politician's office contacted the B.O.P. and requested a copy of Brian's file so Harkin could determine why it was that Brian was being sent so far away from his family. And he'd wanted to know the reason why Brian couldn't be designated to Pekin where his father was. That added a whole new dimension to the tug-of-war. Brian's team (which was made up of his Case Manager, his Unit Manager and his Counselor) called him into the office to chastise him for trying to countermand their authority by involving a politician. Particularly one as influential as the Senator. But after venting their disdain for his tactics and threatening him with some dreadful outcome, they had quickly re-designated him from Victorville to Pekin. Where I was. Harkin's intercession was one of the most heartening events for us in our long ordeal through jails and prisons. Thank you, Tom, posthumously, and thank you, Carl, who's still kickin'.

By the time Brian arrived at Pekin in November, 2000, I had already been through the prison politics of getting into a 2-man cell. That was the tits in Pekin. The best living possible under those otherwise dreadful circumstances. When I first arrived at the fenced-in F.C.I., I'd been assigned to a 3-man cell. It was extremely cramped because it had been designed for two inmates. In the room already was a guy named "Camel". His real name is Mukglis Toma, an Orthodox Christian from Iraq who had immigrated to the U.S. at a very young age. Camel told me that Saddam Hussain had used Christians as his personal bodyguards because he couldn't trust the feuding factions of Islam. Camel was doing 25 years for cocaine. Also in the cell was a mixed-race Hispanic guy named Joe. He was a cocaine offender, too. Camel had some juice, both on the compound with the inmates and, surreptitiously, with a few of the staff. He was like that.

Camel always treated me with respect, especially after hearing my story. I had the credentials that meant something in prison (i.e. I'd taken my case to trial, I hadn't cooperated with "the man") and I was

transferring in from a USP. He had gotten into a corner cell overlooking the compound, one of the best cells available, with a Palestinian guy who was soon to be deported back to his homeland. By protocol, that made the cell Camel's. When the guy went back to the Middle East, Camel made sure I got into that cell with him. He'd even given me the bottom bunk out of respect, which was an extremely unusual thing to do. Camel was a guy living on the edge. He ran a sports ticket (which was the inmates' most popular form of gambling). And he had a hand in some of the drugs being smuggled into the facility through a few sideways cops and prison staff. In the prison lexicon, Camel was a player. The S.I.D. (Special Investigation Division) was always after his ass. They shook down our cell regularly. That's one of the reasons why Camel trusted me to be his celly. He knew I wouldn't snitch him out. But they never caught him with anything while I was in there, except for a bunch of postage stamps, which were used as currency by the inmates in prison, and that wasn't a serious infraction.

Sometime after Christmas, Camel got put in the "hole" (disciplinary lockup for investigation. He was always into something). Our Case Manager told me that Camel would not be coming back into the privileged cell when he got out of the hole, so I might as well find another cellmate. Voila! Brian was right there. It was a very fortuitous chain of events. The sequence enabled Brian and me to spend the next four years as roommates. Cellmates. Cellies. All that. If you have to do time, which we did, that was definitely the way to do it. Judy was only about two hours away, and she was able to visit both of us at the same time. Other family members and friends came by to visit. My old friend, Ronnie Matus, visited us regularly, often bringing along another visitor or two and always three Dominican cigars which we were able to smoke in the designated outdoor area. Puffing on a big stogie was a bit of a big deal for inmates. One of the people he brought to see us a few times was my fourth-grade teacher, Renee Reilly. Sister Mary Renee. She had taught several of my siblings, and me, at Immaculate Conception School in Cedar Rapids, a landmark in the old days. Catholic. Renee wrote to me in prison many times over the years. She once told me her name before becoming a nun was Rita Wilson. I wrote her back to assure her that I, too, had had many aliases. Renee has a good sense of humor. She's still kickin' it in an assisted-living home at 96 years old. My brother-in-law, Frank Langer, had a pilot's license and belonged to a flying club near St. Paul. He and my sister, Michele, flew our mother, Margaret, down to see me for a weekend in the summer of 2000. Ma was riddled with cancer, but she was able to make one last trip to see her wayward son.

Brian and I lived pretty good during our time together at Pekin. I worked at the UNICOR furniture factory (prison industry), which afforded us a few extra privileges. Brian had a job collecting trash one evening a week. He'd had to pay several books of postage stamps (jailhouse currency) through the inmate hierarchy to get the cushy assignment. And we got a little herb in there too, once in a while. Several different

sources at various times. Camel gave us some a few times, and Brian had a friend, an infamous Canadian/South African hashish smuggler, Mike Medjuck, who gave us a nice sample on occasion, but most of the time we just paid for it. Brian often cooked elaborate (for prison) meals from specialty fish and vegetables stolen from the mess hall, and then sold on the inmate black market. A Jamaican guy, Knoxroy Coke, another friend of Brian's from a previous prison, could really cook, too. There were plenty of times we had mackerel and dumplings, Jamaican-style with curry. Good eatin'! Jason Alcorn, everybody called him "Corn", a guy who was in prison for impersonating a cop (uniform and all) and then robbing drug dealers at gunpoint, got herb sometimes when his mom and sister visited him. He liked the hard stuff, though, so we always got whatever weed he managed to smuggle in. And it was always very good. His partner was "Slick Rick" LaBaume. Rick was a pretty cool dude, a north-sider from Chicago.

The only problem was random U.A.s (urinalysis). We got lucky, real lucky on several occasions, somehow avoiding a dirty U.A., which would have meant misery for both of us. Once Brian and I were up in our cell, surreptitiously burning some herb. We always had a Black & Mild cigar going to mask the smell. We heard the unit officer shout from his office doorway downstairs, "Tranmer ... go to the Lieutenant's Office!" We knew right away what that meant. A piss test. "Which one?" we shouted back. "Brian. Brian Tranmer. Report to the Lieutenant's Office." Oh, shit! And we'd been smoking regularly for about a week before that. We just knew Brian was going down.

He went to the Lieutenant's Office and gave them a sample after stalling for as long as he could. Back then, urinalysis wasn't very sophisticated. The B.O.P. had a contract with some lab in California. They'd send the samples out west for workup. Rumor had it that the process was cost-prohibitive, so if they took 50 samples, they might only send 10, or so, for the expensive analysis. That's all we could figure had happened, because as the time dragged slowly on, they never did lock him up. So they never tested his urine. We had dodged another bullet.

Some weekends we'd buy a 16-ounce water bottle filled with white lightning (prison hooch). It was distilled in darkness but quaffed in the brightness of an early Saturday afternoon. With half a bottle of that stuff and a few tokes of good weed, a marooned convict could easily transport to another zone of unreality.

While we were zoning out in Pekin, Jennifer and Doug had their third child, Nicholas James, a fine addition to the human race.

February 5, 2005, Judy drove over to Pekin and picked up Brian after he'd walked out the front door of the prison. 13 1/2 years without thinking clearly. He stayed a few days in Iowa, and then flew down to Tallahassee where he'd have to start over again and begin walking down the 5-year parole, which had been part of his sentence. A friend of Brian's from our Miami days, Timmy Orme, had stayed in contact with Brian throughout his time in prison. He was a true friend. A couple years before Brian got out, though, Timmy died when his Harley went over a cliff in California. Timmy's dad, Terry, who had done time himself for piloting a load of cocaine, felt obligated to help Brian after his son had died so tragically. And he did. He often sent money to Brian's account, and when Brian got out, Terry provided him with a car all the way from California. Terry absolutely helped to make Brian's life far less stressful. So many good people along the way.

Once he got to Tallahassee, another old friend from days gone by, Stuart Reese, helped Brian immensely with the transition back to civilization. Brian got a job at a fence company. Supervised release required it. He skipped between a couple of apartments before finding his current spot in 2006. It was around that time when he met his longtime, unwavering friend, Umi.

35 Still Doin' Time, Springfield

Brian was gone. It took a little getting used to. Two things, specifically, helped ease the despondency of prison. Having a conviction for marijuana, which wasn't actually hard criminal behavior, even though it was against the law, and the fact that my wife, Judith Kay, hadn't dumped me. It was almost inconceivable, and most of the inmates didn't believe it. But there she was, Mrs. James Tranmer. I stayed in Pekin until June, 2005. My security level had gone down again, from a medium-level to a low. I was redesignated to Springfield, Missouri. The joint at Springfield was classified by the B.O.P. as an Administrative-Security level, but because the place was a United States Medical Center for Federal Prisoners, inmates with every custody-level, up to and including maximum-security, came there for treatment. John Gotti died there of throat cancer in June, 2002. The Blind Sheikh, Omar Rahman, died there after I left. They kept those high profile guys locked down 24/7. We never saw them.

Before I left Pekin, an inmate buddy of mine, Bill, who had been to Springfield a short time before that, told me that tobacco sold on the black market in the Medical Center for \$300 a pack. A pack of Bugler Rolling Tobacco, that is. Those sold on the commissary in Pekin for 90 cents. Inconceivable. It was during the time when the B.O.P. was transitioning all the prisons to "No Smoking" status. They had already stopped its sale and use at Springfield, but Pekin wasn't scheduled to get the ax until June, 2006. When I heard that, I responded to Bill that "if a pack of Bugler sells for \$300, I'll cut off my foot." Bill just answered succinctly, "I kind of like you, Pops. I'd hate to see you hobbling around here on one foot." I made up my mind. I was going to try and smuggle some tobacco into the place that would soon be my new home. I prepared for days. On our commissary they sold boxes of instant oatmeal containing a variety of flavors in individual packets. I painstakingly split some of the packets open and replaced the oatmeal with pressed, stretch-wrapped chunks of tobacco. When I'd finished, I had five packages of Bugler niftily concealed in the packets, and the boxes were sealed back without a trace of tampering. As they were checking through all my property in R&D (Receiving and Discharge) prior to my transfer, the big guy, Officer King, routinely sent my boxes of oatmeal through an X-ray machine. He saw a suspicious, shadowy line going through some of the individual packets. Bummer! I had also slipped a pack of rolling papers in with each packet of tobacco, which caused the telltale giveaway. If I had just been content with the tobacco, I probably would have made it all right. Just at that moment of discovery, though, a female Lieutenant who was in charge of R&D and tremendously disliked by the inmates, smashed her hand in a door. The distraction and confusion half-ass saved me. Instead of getting a shot (which is a disciplinary report) and possibly nixing my transfer, King allowed me to just sign a release for the oatmeal, and he confiscated half-a-dozen books of postage

stamps (which is prison currency). Those six were over the allowed limit for inmate possession. Late that night, before the bus was scheduled for departure early the next morning, I made up another packet of Bugler and keistered it. Smooth sailin'. That single packet of Bugler Tobacco did sell for \$300 worth of stamps, which allowed me to get everything I needed before my property arrived via FedEx. Definitely a “player” move.

The Medical Center would turn out to be about a 10-year stint for me. All the other prisons I'd been at prior to that had had a UNICOR, so I'd never had to look for a job at any of them. I just got into the prison industry, which paid inmates by the hour. Not much, but something. If you were doing significant time, which I was, it was always the best option, for me at least. Springfield didn't have a UNICOR, so I had to find a job elsewhere. There were a little over 1000 inmates in Springfield. 300 were cadre, inmates staffing the place. The rest were medical patients. There was a 50-chair kidney dialysis program set up there too. If I couldn't find a job, I'd probably be assigned to the kitchen, which I really didn't want to do. I was 61 years old. Five years before, when I'd first arrived in Pekin, there had been a waiting list to get into UNICOR. So in the interim, I'd taken a temporary job in the Education Department because one of the inmates whom I'd befriended upon arrival worked there. He got me a job because I could add and subtract without using my fingers and toes. They'd wanted someone to teach math to the student/inmates in the G.E.D program. G.E.D. was a mandatory prison requirement for anybody who hadn't finished high school. At least partly due to my stellar education from the Sisters of Mercy in Catholic schools, I realized I could actually help out some of those guys who were hoping to get a high school diploma while behind bars. But I'd only done it for a few months before going into UNICOR. That short experience was enough, though. So I went to the Education Department in Springfield and convinced them to hire me. For the next six and a half years I managed to develop a technique that actually worked. Scores of felons, whose progress in life had been impeded in part because they lacked the certificate that validated their education level, now comprehended enough math to pass the exam. For almost all of the student/inmates I encountered during that phase of my life, mathematics was, by far, the most difficult subject for them to grasp. Once the word got out that there was somebody down at Education who could help them through the toughest part of the test, we had a resurgence, of sorts, in interest. There was a time when M.C.F.P. Springfield led the B.O.P. statistics every quarter for the number of program inmate graduates. It was a nice feather in our cap.

Getting a high school diploma could be a very emotional achievement. Grown men, sometimes in their 40s and 50s, tearing up when the scores came back from Region revealing that they had finally obtained the elusive piece of paper. Some cited how happy and proud their grandmother was, or their mother, or their daughter, at the previously unobtainable accomplishment. That part of the job was very

fulfilling. One day, I was working with half-a-dozen students on the concept and understanding of fractions. I usually tried to explain the number game as it related to their everyday lives. "Who's heard of an 8-ball?" I asked the class one day. Nods and murmurs greeted my rhetorical question. "Okay, then. That's one/eighth of an ounce. You divide the ounce into eight equal pieces, and each one of them is an eighth. Eight of them make a whole. In that case, one whole ounce," I reasoned confidently, hoping the concept was something they would understand. "No, Teach, you're wrong," one of the students proclaimed loudly. I hadn't been expecting that. "What? What do you mean?" "We got thirteen 8-balls out of an ounce," he explained matter-of-factly. I just slapped the open palm of my hand against my forehead, acknowledging his props. We all had a good laugh. Science vs reality.

Somewhere about that timeframe, my brother Patrick hired an attorney he knew from Chicago to work on a petition for my release. I'd been down for over fifteen years at the time. He raised money from family, friends and sympathizers. Dozens of people wrote letters "To whom it may concern" expressing my more favorable traits, pleading for compassion and common sense. Neither of which are anywhere to be found in bureaucracy. Hey, that's just how it is. Dozens more letters were written by student/inmates who attempted to corroborate the contention that I had been a positive influence for them in achieving a much sought-after diploma. Again, the bureaucracy showed no mercy, no compassion, no common sense. "Bring it all." In other words, "No way!" You're not getting an early release.

Brian came to visit me in 2012. We hadn't actually seen each other since the day he left Pekin in 2005. Some things never change. On the second and final day of his visit ... you guessed it ... he brought me some sacramental balloons. Good herb in prison changes everything. A few select people got to enjoy a little taste of the ambrosial bud and spent several hours in Zion, "that choice and happy place, adorned with wondrous grace". Doing time is so much more tolerable when you're able to put it on cruise control. Just the tiniest morsel of the good stuff took me right home.

It was about that time when I started hanging out sometimes with Gennaro Langella. "Gerry Lang" on the street. Gerry was a one-time underboss and acting boss of the Colombo crime family. He'd been around Springfield for a while, and so had I. He'd always been very remote, and really, I didn't socialize with too many people either. Gerry usually sat on the rec yard with a few mobbed-up guys, one from Cleveland and a periphery Irishman from New York. I'd known the Irishman, Mike, from a different joint, so that's how I initially met up with Gerry. We started cooking together on the weekends. Gerry made a mean pasta dish with noodles (spaghetti), mackerel, olive oil, onions, garlic and the magic of his mother's culinary influence. His mom had been very much like my mom. They were both devout Catholics with all

the trimmings. So Gerry and I had something in common. The last time I saw him was the night before he died. He was in a hospice room in 2-Building when I went up there. "Make room for my friend, Jimmy," he instructed the handful of his associates who'd come by to show their respect. We had a few laughs. It's peculiar how 'the end' cosmic can lighten things up. No more games to play.

My first signs of breaking down physically showed up around 2013. I was almost 70. A dime-size basal-cell spot showed up on the inside of my right calf. It wouldn't go away. After a few months, they did a biopsy and it came back positive for cancer. Basal cell carcinoma. Surgery would be required to remove it. When medical care wasn't available at a specified prison, arrangements were then made with a local hospital to provide that particular specialized treatment. Thus began a series of trips to Mercy Hospital in Springfield to make preparations for surgery. Going out of the prison was always a trip. Strip down before going and again when coming back to ensure security. "Bend over and spread 'em!" was the euphemism they used to describe the procedure employed by the B.O.P. to examine inmates in every security-related situation. Those precautions were S.O.P. and were always conducted after incidents of violence, or when inmates were going-to or coming-from a visit, going to and returning from outside procedures (i.e. trips to court, medical trips etc.), and many other spontaneous circumstances. The drill is, first, get naked. Then, facing the cops, lift your arms, show your armpits, brush your fingers through your hair, flap your ears, and then lift up your nuts, in that order. Then turn around, lift each foot in succession so the cop can see the bottoms, and finally, "bend over and spread 'em". Yep! Bend forward and spread your butt cheeks. Just to make sure you didn't stash something in your behind, and it may be protruding. After going through that process hundreds, perhaps thousands, of times during my Bureau of Prisons' experience, the humiliation no longer registers on my scale of human emotions. That's what you get for breaking the law. "Bend over and spread 'em!"

Dr. Khan, the most-noted plastic surgeon around the area at that time, finally cut a piece out of my lower leg, removing the offending basal cell carcinoma. He got it all. The only testament to his handiwork is the scar. In 2014, they transferred me again, to F.C.I. Milan, west of Detroit, Michigan. I started working in UNICOR almost immediately. It was yet another metal factory. But because it was a low-security level prison, there weren't any stabbings, and very few fights, actually. Most of the inmates were trying to do whatever was necessary to go home as soon as possible.

During one of my annual medical exams, the prison doctor, a Michigan State alum whose father had suffered from prostate cancer, detected elevated levels of P.S.A. (Prostate Specific Antigen) in my blood samples. The numbers were in the danger zone. Doc started the necessary paperwork to have me transferred

to a medical facility for treatment. If not for him and his determination to help me, I never would have known that I had cancer. I had no symptoms. They transferred me to Butner Medical Center in North Carolina. The cancer ward accommodations where I was assigned were about as good as it gets in prison. We had large two man rooms (no bunk beds). Each room had its own shower and bathroom area. Medical patients didn't have to get a job. We were convalescing, so no one in our unit had a job.

It took a while to break into the radiation treatment cycle, but once I cleared all the tests, I was given forty-two radiation treatments. Three treatments a week for fourteen weeks, Monday, Wednesday and Friday. They literally burned up the cancer. Then, they had to monitor and test the patient for one year after the treatment was finished to make sure the P.S.A. level had diminished to an acceptable range, and stayed there.

During the interim wait, Brian came up from Tallahassee for a visit. Of course he brought along several balloons filled with the spiciest of spices, a very pleasant gift, indeed. Brian also brought along Amy, his soon-to-be wife, to meet me. While I was at Butner, an old friend from our Tallahassee days, Jesse Merritt, came to visit me on a regular basis. He lived over by Durham. Jesse was an Episcopal Minister. He had connections in the church, and from that vaunted position he was able to persuade the Archbishop to write a favorable letter on my behalf. Elizabeth Matus came down from New York for a visit. One of my oldest friends, Chuck Joseph, came by a couple times in his 18-wheeler. Butner was on his route. I hadn't seen him in damn near 50 years.

There was a Clemency Program during President Obama's tenure as POTUS. I had applied twice and been rejected twice. I still have one of the rejection letters. It basically says that I did not qualify for clemency, and that I should not apply again. Shows you what they know. Accompanying my application had been stacks of letters from family members, friends, student/inmates and just about anyone else my advocates could recruit. Ronnie Matus got Captain O-6 Robert "Bob" Naughton, whose family I'd known from many years before growing up in Cedar Rapids, to write a letter attesting to my character. Bob had been a U.S. Navy Aviator who'd been shot down over Vietnam in 1967, spending 2118 days in captivity at the Hanoi Hilton. His words had a powerful influence in certain circles. All the letters people had written vouching for my character contributed to my eventual release.

36 Reprieve

The calendar flipped over to 2017. I was 73 years old and still looking at about 7 1/2 more years until I would bring my sentence to the door. My radiation treatments appeared to have been successful. My P.S.A level had dipped below 1.0 and holding steady. That was a relief. But I honestly hadn't been tripping on that illusory date. June 26, 2024 was still a mirage.

President Obama was nearing the end of his second term. His clemency program was releasing inmates at a record pace. Speculation was rampant, but I knew I'd been rejected twice, and nothing seemed to have altered that little fact. By then, even the B.O.P. had progressed to the point where the inmates actually had access to a limited program on the computer which showed the names and case history of federal prisoners, male and female, who had received executive clemency from the President. I studied it daily, comparing my offenses to the ones of those who'd received the previously unheard-of leniency. But there didn't seem to be any pattern. January 20th, the day the presidency of Obama would be over, was rapidly approaching. About a week before that date, my Case Manager called me into his office. He asked me several questions. I explained that I had applied for executive clemency, but had been turned down. Twice! He told me he'd received instructions to have me reapply. Deep down, I knew what that meant, but I refused to show it. I explained that I didn't have any of the forms and didn't know where to get them. He replied that he could do it all on his computer, and all I would have to do was sign it. Hell yeah! Where do I make my X? But he continued that I hadn't actually received anything yet, so I should remain reticent and let it play out. No problem. I told no one, not wanting to upset the apple cart. Obama had granted more than 200 clemencies on the 17th of January, or thereabouts. My name hadn't appeared on that list. There was speculation, even in the media, that the pardons may have been his last such act of benevolence before forfeiting the mantle of power.

I was sitting in the T.V. room watching the pageantry of the exchange of power on January 20, 2017 when I heard my name over the loudspeaker, "Inmate Tranmer report to your Case Manager." I still wasn't sure if I'd been granted or denied my prayers when my guy greeted me at the doorway to his office with, "Are you ready to go home, Tranmer?" I knew the jig was up. My somewhat judicially excessive tribulation was coming to an end. Judy told me later that when the list of Obama's final 300+ clemencies, which he'd signed on January 19, including my name, a large number of family members, friends and advocates had called her to share the improbable news. The old ganja man would be going home. Thank you, Barack. But his signature hadn't meant my immediate release. The Feds had a step-down program whereby I would have

to go to a Federal Prison Camp in Pekin, Illinois for four months to sort of program me for the streets, and allow the bureaucracy to thoroughly check out my release plans. I found out I would have to serve out an 8-year Federal supervised release (parole), which had been part of my original sentence, 420 months, plus eight years of supervised release. They really didn't want to let go completely, but I was elated at the possibility of getting out the front door of prison without handcuffs.

Within a week, they had cleared my medical release from the radiation program. They flew me on a Learjet to an airport near Pekin. I was the sole inmate. I'd been shackled on the flight, but when I got off the plane, there were no more cuffs, no more chains. I had done more than 23 years shuffling around with my ankles chained together and my wrists handcuffed to another chain around my waist whenever I had been away from the prison confines. But this time I walked on my own to a dark-colored Ford sedan where another inmate awaited to drive me to the compound. No cops, just two prisoners afforded a little rope. I quickly adjusted.

The camp had no fence, no barriers to prevent inmates from leaving. There was plenty of nonsense going on behind the scenes and enough straight-out stupidity, but they seemed to tolerate a fair amount of it. I often said Psalms to myself as I walked around the track that surrounded the recreation yard. No matter how horribly I may have botched things up, I have always found solace in the Psalms. There was a little glitch in the process shortly before I actually walked out the door. By protocol, the housing I'd be going to after my release had to be eyeballed and approved by the probation office. When they went to Judy's apartment, the situation had not passed their dictates. Both Judy and Dan, who were living there at the time, had felonies on their records. That's a definite no-no for anyone on paper. Fortunately, my sister, Theresa, had a very comfortable home in Iowa City in a very private neighborhood. She invited me to stay with her. Theresa came to my rescue.

The US Marshals were loaded for bear when they came by to inspect her residence. They were armed for combat. Bulletproof vests and all the accompanying armaments. Theresa's place passed without a hitch, and her criminal history was spotless. Brava, Theresa! Ronnie Matus, a true and faithful friend, drove Judy over to Pekin on the morning of May 17, 2017. They waited in the parking lot until all the i's had been dotted and all the t's had been crossed. It was a surreal feeling walking out of prison with all my possessions in an orange laundry bag slung over my shoulder. I'd given everything else away to other poor, forlorn inmates. Judy was smiling. Ronnie took a picture of us outside the prison at that moment. Nice. On our return trip to Iowa City, we stopped by Tiffin, Iowa to see my older brother, Frank, who was staying in an assisted-living apartment. We all downed a shot of bourbon and toasted my release. Frank only lasted

another five months or so. I was able to visit him another dozen or more times. He could be a cantankerous old cuss, but Frank was a cool, gray-bearded, ganja-smoking vodka drinker completely baffled by life. Rest in peace. Frank.

The private sunroom at Theresa's was like utopia for me for the next two years. Sometimes deer frolicked and nibbled on the vegetation just outside my windows. It was a very easy time to be thankful. But I needed a job to satisfy the provisions of my supervised release. I was 73 years old with no marketable skills. And a used-up old ex-convict at that. Judy had to drive me around in her heirloom Buick to just keep my head above water. We had to drive over to Davenport a couple of times. That's where I had to report to the office that would be handling my supervision. Fortunately, an old friend from long ago, Jeff Egeland, sold me a reliable Subaru Forester, and he let me have a few months to pay it off. I had to piss in a cup for urinalysis twice a week at first, then weekly for a while, and finally, it got down to just randoms once a month. I refrained from my sacramental offering. No problem.

My first mainstream job in almost 50 years came through a temporary employment agency. I got hired on the 2nd shift at Procter & Gamble in Iowa City. It was on an assembly line, making up small orders for thousands of customers. I only lasted a few months. On my way home one night after a strenuous shift loading pallets, I had a stroke while I was driving home. I could barely see and was only partially cognizant of what I was doing, but I did manage to make it back to Theresa's after several close calls. It was late at night, so the traffic was sparse. When Theresa saw me, she immediately called for an ambulance. I had to stay in the hospital for several days before they cautiously released me.

The job at P&G was obviously too much for me, so I had to find something else. Not much to choose from. My brother-in-law, Ted Heald, and my nephew, Jesse, connected me up with James "Jamie" Caldwell, who was instrumental in getting me a job at the Veterans Hospital in Iowa City. It was just what I needed. Being a U.S. Army veteran proved to be the single most relevant entry on my resume. The V.A. took good care of me medically, and in May, 2019, Judy and I were able to buy a nice little house in Coralville, Iowa. It was about two miles from where I worked at the hospital. It was a big deal for us. The V.A. guaranteed 100% of the mortgage, so we qualified automatically because of my previous stint in the Army. My niece, Tammy, paved the way for us to move in. We would have more than two years of comfortable living and the happiness of simplicity. We had plenty of good times with our family and friends, enjoying many spontaneous laughs. Those were the smoothest living conditions either of us had been blessed with in many years. Judy possessed qualities that are rare among humanity. Her love and loyalty for everyone dear to her surpassed all other needs or emotions.

My supervised-release officer, a lady that we never actually met, took me off the urinalysis regimen after two years, I had always tested negative on all the previous U.A.s, and I'd maintained a steady job, sending her copies of my pay stubs once a month, along with my report. I was still on paper, but temporarily at least, the weight was off me. I knew that every parolee had a freebie. In other words, they could get at least one dirty U.A. without being violated. So I took a chance. I figured if they were trying to trick me ... well ... I guess they got me. I started smoking my favorite substance again. Some good ganja. It had been many, many moons since I'd burned weed regularly. I was thankful to be doing it, once again mellowly strolling through that holy place on rare occasion.

Judy passed away on August 4, 2021. She'd begun to experience shortness of breath after very little exertion. Her doctor referred her to a cardiologist. Upon examination, Judy had serious blockage. We'd been planning to go to Florida. Brian, Amy and great-granddaughter, Elizabeth, had a nice spot north of Tallahassee. Jennifer, Doug and their kids had a place off Velda Dairy Road. Judy had driven south every winter while I was in prison. Sometimes she'd spend months visiting the kids and grandkids after she retired. I was fortunate enough to go on four trips down there with her after I got out, but because I was still on supervised release, I could only go for 10 days at a time. Max. I always stretched it out a little, but I didn't want to disrupt my life again.

After a battery of tests, the cardiologist recommended open heart bypass surgery for her. We went together to at least two screening processes with the surgeon and her staff. 98% success rate. That's what they told us. Judy was hesitant at first, but after the counseling, she decided to have it done before we went down to Florida. Her blockage was severe, so she needed something done. I took her to the University Hospital. The surgery went smoothly. She was in her recovery room talking with us (Joe's fiancé, Kelsey, and me) that night and she actually ate some of the dinner they brought for her. We stayed past the visiting hours' window and then bid her good night before we left. When I came back the next morning, Judy was hooked up to all the various apparatuses in the room, and she was unresponsive. She never regained consciousness.

A parade of family and friends came by over the next day or so to pay respects and say something to her. All the nurses assured us that it was very possible she could still hear us and process the words we said to her. We waited for many hours until Brian was able to fly up from Florida to say goodbye to his mother. Before they removed her from life support, Jennifer, who'd been diagnosed with stage-4 colon cancer, herself, was unable to travel. Doug, Brooke and Nick came up for her memorial. Jennifer was able to speak

with her mom before Judy passed away. Those two had been as close as a mother and daughter can be. They shared every thought and every soap opera.

Jennifer made it another two more years before succumbing to the insidious ravages of her illness. Doug, her husband, dedicated himself to making sure she had every possible comfort as she slowly deteriorated and finally went on hospice care at home. Judy and Jennifer were two beautiful people and two benevolent souls. They were gone from our lives.

37 Epilogue

The two women who had borne the brunt of my mercurial madness were gone. They took the shame and insecurity of being my wife and daughter, respectively, to the grave with them. Judy's passing had been unexpected and staggering. Jennifer's ordeal had been prolonged. Some good days, some not so good. I did have the opportunity to get to know Doug, Brooke, Scott and Nick a little bit after so many years of agonizing obscurity. In spite of her father's inglorious behavior, Jennifer had managed to find a real "Knight in Shining Armor". Together, they raised three children of outstanding character and good Christian values. You can't hope for more than that.

My life has certainly been affected by marijuana, and the effects my usage and fervent advocacy relating to its properties has had on me. And, especially, on my wife and children. Despite all the tribulations, I continue to smoke it on a daily basis. I just like to get high. Some things are hard to change. I simply like the seemingly-elevated state of consciousness I always achieve after a puff or two of the controversial plant. All the people involved in the rise and fall of the Church have their own stories about the characters, their roles and all the daredevil escapades. Many have passed away. Among those still living, there are very few instances of camaraderie and very rare examples of the "louu" we professed. The infrequent exceptions, though significant and perhaps heartfelt, seem unsustainable. The radiance and persuasion of Ivy's mystique have vanished. He embodied the ancient covenant of holiness in the form of man. He was, to me, proof it could be done. We witnessed it, but that's all. "We got the Bone" progressively morphed into, "Bone? What's the Bone?" "Whatchoo talkin' 'bout, Willis?"

The core of Ivy's persona had been tuned-in to mankind's miserable estate. Sinfulness and disregard for old-school morality. The Psalms have been a valuable tool to keep one's eye single,

so that the whole house might be full of light. I haven't been much good at that, but a little reflection always comforts me. I regret many of the decisions I've made, and the repercussions from those poor decisions, but experiencing the realms of the ganja world isn't one of them. Maybe it should be. I always knew that being persecuted for the "plant of renown" was not something to be ashamed of, even in the confines of prison. I knew I wasn't a criminal.

"And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen anymore." The Bible means many things to many people, but I can't get some of those timeless bits of wisdom out of my head. I know ganja is not for everyone. We used to say, "It's good for the young, it's good for the old, it's good for the baby, one day old". But it's really not for everyone. And children should wait until they've matured enough to make a decision like that for themselves. It is, however, for me. Thank you, Lord, O thank you, Lord, for you remembered we.

"And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." It's possible to see how a description like that could put a few wildly improbable ideas into an old man's addled state of consciousness.

And the herb was only part of our doctrine. It was "the herb, the word and the man". That was our Trinity. Nobody was able to figure it out, though, much less live it. Many great men and women have endeavored to do the right thing. That's the essence of life, I think. Try to do good and pray. I haven't managed to manifest much yet, but I do have the "herb" part figured out pretty well. Just smoke it. And now, after all the tumultuous hostilities, nobody much cares about "Reefer Madness" anymore. Cannabis is now permissible for medical use in 39 states, and it's legal in 24 states for recreational use. Maybe more. President Trump recently changed the scheduling of marijuana from Schedule 1 to Schedule 3, essentially acknowledging that the wicked old ganja weed has some medicinal value. The stress level around the world is far more compelling than a bag of fragrant bud.

Very recently, as I was wrapping up the final chapter of our story to date, an old family friend from Jamaica came by Brian's place for a few days. We've had a lot of shared experiences over the years, which provided us with endless reminiscences and a moment of reflection on those memories.

Arriving with the slaves from West Africa to the British West Indies in the 16th century was a diasporic religion. Obeah. The ritual practices of obeah became interwoven into every fabric of Jamaican culture. Every Jamaican, regardless of color or social status, knows about obeah. The obeah man is believed to have within his power the ability to render someone invincible, to resuscitate the dead, cure all diseases, protect a man from the consequences of his crimes, and cause great harm to anyone he wished. The obeah woman uses her feminine charms to seduce others to get her own way. One of the rituals of obeah is to dance around a fire to the beat of drums, chanting, clapping and jumping around. That sounds familiar, and the thought of it looks familiar.

From my very first memories of Jamaica, the word “obeah” had always been a part of the daily lexicon of the people at some level. It was always perceived to be a dark science performed by people in darkness. But supposedly, obeah had no wield over the Rastaman because we had the truth, the Psalms and the ganja to ward off all superstitious fuckery. The Spirit I encountered and experienced with Ivy was totally liberating. Free and focused. Somehow after Ivy’s death and the transition to Keith as the dictator of both the tone and the direction of our path, we became like a dog on a leash. And I wasn’t quite sure if I was the dog or the leash. St. Thomas Parish in Jamaica is known among the local people for obeah. And lore has it that the obeah man from St. Thomas possesses the most powerful spells among all the other parishes. Wally was from Bath, St. Thomas, and his family (which included Dougie) had been known to be heavy practitioners of that dark sorcery science. Whatever you see, know it to be the Will of Goud.

Thanks

Judith Kay - first and foremost in my life. In retrospect, Judy was loyal and forbearing beyond comprehension in all aspects of my life. When we met, she was 21 and I was 20 going on 10. It was at a Saturday-night dance party at the big ballroom in Swisher, Iowa on a balmy, late-summer evening. Her allure was far more than just the passions of youth, although that was enticingly persuasive, too. She always possessed a subliminal charm that I had never experienced with anyone else, except for the coquettishly shy Miss Campbell from Muscatine, Iowa. I cherish the thought of her still. Judy always wanted me to write a book. For you, babe.

My parents, Zack and Margaret - My mother is a saint, a kind and gentle soul. But she would light up my ass on certain occasions when I misbehaved. Ma was the disciplinarian in the family. Dad had as many exemplary qualities as any man could hope to possess. He fathered 12 children and provided for all of us. He was a faithful husband and never touched either my mother or any of his kids in anger, no matter the difficulty. No smoke, no drink. My parents were always available for their children until death, and often beyond.

Brian - He gave clarity to this story. Without his assistance, I wouldn't have been able to tell it in this way.

Jennifer - Jen bore the chagrin of being my daughter. With her devoted husband, Doug, they've raised three exemplary young adults.

Dan and Joe - Both endured the anguish of a father often missing in action.

All of my siblings - Sisters and brothers who have always been more than tolerant of my volatile, unpredictable exploits. Kathy, Frank, Michele, Geraldine, Zack jr., Bob, Patrick, Theresa, Mark and John. And Tootser, who passed away as a toddler. Thank you.

Umi - (Urmilla Deshpande) My mentor, friend and advisor on this project.

Brother Ivy - The guy who influenced my life more than any other human soul. And I really only knew him for a few months. There was a unique mystique about his presence that defies explanation. Or the explanation defies reason.

All the countless Church brothers and sisters - every color and ethnic background. They experienced the magic and the disappointment. The untold others who were kind to us along the way. Special regard for Howie and Big Bob, posthumously. Thank you.

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If I have inadvertently omitted some, which I surely have, thank you.