

AN ABDUCTION REVELATION:
The Comeback Kid Returns

A restless spirit on an endless flight.

Smashwords edition

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An Abduction Revelation is a sci-fi/memoir that explores a compelling blend of mysterious unknown entities with seemingly true events.

Who are the abductors? Where do they come from? Where are they hiding? Do they even exist?

The answers are revealed in an intriguing adventure spiked with mystery, a dash of romance, a teaspoon of secrets, and a cup of revelations that will shock and torment your reality. A perfect recipe for an entertaining tale.

Join the 'Comeback Kid' on his incredible journey as he uncovers secrets behind UFOs and comes face to face with his abductors.

REVIEWS:

An amusing sci-fi/memoir curiosity - Kirkus Reviews

The true appeal and genius of this story is figuring out what is real and what is fiction. Michala

I am not a sci-fi fan, but this book fascinated me and held my interest from start to finish - Caitlin

Whether you believe in UFOs and aliens or not, this is a truly interesting story - Pinky Pollock

Hay is a fabulous storyteller. Rivals with the best sci-fi novels - Zillie Carlson

*Mind-blowing. Very intriguing and fascinating read. One of the best I have read this year -
Stephanie Verhaegen*

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Most of all, thanks to my lovely wife, Karen, for enduring another book. Sometimes the writer's bug can last for days, leaving me in a trance that causes me to delay or skip chores, honey-do's, bill payments, hygiene, meals, and even some favorite TV shows. Hopefully I will be able to reward her with a nice vacation cruise in the Caribbean. Only we'd best stay clear of the Bermuda Triangle.

PREVIEW

Howdy! Come on in and make yourself comfortable. Can I get you something to drink? I have a compelling story to tell you that will keep you on the edge of your seat. You might want to use the restroom now, because once I start, you won't want me to stop.

You might keep in mind that I was raised in the middle of America, in the 50's. For some, we may have talked a bit 'funny'.

Here is an excerpt to wet your appetite:

"Radioman Hay, report to the radio room on the double," I heard over the ship's intercom.

I had the Con (duty) that night and had just taken a break. I could feel the anticipation in the radio room as soon as I stepped through the door.

"We just received an S.O.S.," shouted the excited radioman who had been monitoring the emergency band.

A ship was in danger. It turned out to be a Russian trawler. American fleets were always shadowed by these suspicious fishing boats. They were constantly snooping and spying on U.S. fleets. We knew who they were and what they were doing, and they knew we knew. It was a cat and mouse game, but we couldn't do anything about it in international waters.

International law required us to respond to an S.O.S., so we took advantage of the opportunity to board their vessel. No U.S. personnel had had that opportunity in the past, so our boarding party was very excited to be able to board a Russian spy boat. Everyone's adrenaline was flowing faster than a class five whitewater rapid.

It definitely wasn't a fishing vessel, as we had suspected all along, even though everything about it looked fishy. We couldn't find one fish onboard, let alone a fishing pole. There was however, a lot of fishy electronic equipment, enough that we wondered how the boat could stay afloat.

The Russian crew was completely disoriented. They appeared to be in shock and were scared shitless. Only one of them spoke. He babbled in broken English, about some strange-looking flying machine, with small hairless creatures hitting them with a beaming light and a crewman

gone missing. Nothing he said was making any sense to anyone in our boarding party, except maybe me. I don't know why, but I suspected I might know what they had experienced. Something in the back of my mind told me that I had been there and done that. However, I felt it best to keep my mouth shut.

We could smell Vodka on their breath, so it was assumed that they had to be drunk. What happened to the ship and its crew was later classified top secret, so if I were to tell you the rest of this story, I'd have to kill you. That might not be good for future book sales. I can say it was another one of those government cover-ups that you don't read or hear about in the news.

This incident enforced my thoughts that human beings weren't the only living creatures in the universe after all. But my thoughts didn't last long as we were thrown into a war.

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO MY WORLD

Won't you come on in? Miracles, I guess, still happen now and then. Step into my heart. —Eddie Arnold

Hey, the Kid is back... But then you really didn't know that I was gone, did you? Not yet anyway. Wait till you hear what I have to say upon discovering the revelation that sparked this revised edition to my memoirs.

To refresh your memory, following my retirement, I wrote and published my memoirs, *The Comeback Kid: The Memoirs of Thomas L. Hay*. The project was an invigorating whirlwind of self-enlightenment and an intense emotional trip. It left me wondering who that old fart is that stares back from the mirror.

After publishing my memoirs, it occurred to me that I might have some intriguing and mysterious phenomena buried within my subconscious. I began once again to contemplate what had actually happened that night in my youth when I lost control of the car on the deserted country road outside Clinton, Missouri. Was it a freak accident, or according to the evidence, was I abducted by aliens?

Did aliens actually abduct my first wife Claudia and me? She has claimed that this happened not once, but twice: once as we were on our way to the courthouse to get married, and the second time while we were on our belated honeymoon. At the time, however, neither of us were aware that it had happened.

The abductions were revealed to her after we separated and divorced. She had to divorce me because her spirit persuaded her to become a vegetarian, fast and abstain from sexual activity. This eventually melted the memory blocks implanted by the aliens, unveiled her subconscious, and exposed traumatic and terrifying past experiences.

However, at the time she first told me about this, I didn't believe her. Would you? I just assumed she had a fertile imagination. I was more interested to recover from the heartbreaking divorce she enforced upon me.

But, after publishing my memoirs, I got to thinking, "What if Claudia was right? What if what she was saying was true?" Curiosity got the best of this old tomcat. The thought tormented me to no end. I felt that I needed to investigate the possibility that I might have hidden memories buried in my subconscious.

Since age has diminished my sex drive and I could stand to lose a few pounds, I decided to give it a shot. If Claudia was right and I had implanted memory blocks, the way that I could melt them, she said, would be to follow in her footsteps and adopt her ascetic lifestyle.

OH-MY-GOD! You're not going to believe this. She was right! Never in a million years could I have imagined what lay hidden in my subconscious. The memory block melt was agonizing, but fruitful. However, she was only partially right. Naively, she had seen only the tip of an iceberg. I discovered a revelation that exposed the Antarctic.

The revelation was glaringly productive, uncovering peculiar, bizarre dreams that occurred in my sleep. Dreams that turned out to be memories of two people who were alike, but existed in separate entities, yet had similar life events.

When looking into a mirror, I could recognize the person who stared back, but I didn't know him. Now you are probably wondering how this could be? At the time, I had no idea.

This dilemma created an identity crisis, disorientation, and some peculiar interpretations. Parallel worlds were tangled in the same dimension. Reality and imagination intermingled, mystifying and tormenting my existence. Which was real? Maybe both, but then again, maybe neither. To say the least, it was a confusing and complicated relationship.

It became obvious that I had to rewrite my memoirs. These whole new realm of events unearthed hidden revelations and created a completely new life history. Life events that the Kid never knew existed.

If you have read my original memoir, then bear with me. In this revised story, I have repeated some events, to refresh your memory. These new events, plus the new developments, stand alone in its own story. I have added some colorful insights you might find intriguing.

So, how in the world do I share these hidden memories without coming across as an alien abductee prankster? I have concluded that there really is no other way than to just go ahead and spill the beans. You may wonder, is my story reality or fiction? Or maybe a dream? A hallucination, or the product of a fertile imagination gone wild? If it was imagination, where did it come from. Could they have been memories implanted in my subconscious?

It is not my intention to convince you one way or the other. However, you might want to keep in mind the words of Albert Einstein:

The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand in awe, is as good as dead; his eyes are closed and he is a stranger unto himself.

Life is but a series of events, much like an assorted box of chocolates, and we never know what might come next. I have used songs to introduce and portray my life events. Often when we hear a song, it reminds us of a person, a place, or a time in our lives. The songs and event descriptions are listed in an Appendix.

Anyway, here's my story and, yes, I'm sticking to it. But be warned. What I am about to reveal may cause a disturbance in your comfort zone. You are about to board a roller coaster ride that will change your life forever. You might want to check that your seat belt is fasten. Your world as you know it is about to get turned upside down and inside out.

Que sera sera, whatever will be, will be. The future might not be what it's cracked up to be and not ours to see—or is it?

Who are the Abductors? Where do they come from? Where are they hiding? Do they even exist?

The Comeback Kid returns with a stunning revelation that will shock and torment your reality.

CHAPTER ONE

The Bequest

COUNTRY ROAD

And drivin' down the road I get the feelin. . .that I should have been home yesterday. . .Country roads, take me home to the place I belong.—John Denver

The coolness of the air made me shiver, yet sweat from my furrowed brow burned my eyes and blurred my vision as I struggled to open my eyes. When I finally got them open, bright lights of many colors blinded me and forced my eyes shut once again.

I could sense movement around me, which compelled me to force my eyes to open once more. The bright lights and my blurred vision made it difficult to make out my surroundings. I watched, as ghostly shadows reflected off the walls, and danced about with spastic, yet graceful movements.

I lay on a surface that was translucent and unsupported, giving me a feeling of floating on air.

In my blurred vision, I could make out a large circular device with multicolored lights positioned above my torso. Sharp pointed utensils protruded from the middle of the sphere.

I felt naked under the snowy white cloth that covered most of my body. Strange high pitched eerie sounds reverberated in my mind.

Something lifted the cloth and started probing and prodding various parts of my anatomy. My inspector played with me as if I were its favorite doll.

An altered state of consciousness cloaked my mind. I began to laugh, then cry, as I floated off to Disneyland, while the melody "It's a Small World" played in my head. I had no idea what was so funny or sad. Nonetheless, tears poured from my eyes, further blurring and confusing my surroundings.

After doing whatever they had intended, my abductors implanted a memory block and a tracking device and sent me on my way. Their plan was now initiated. This would be my first abduction. It wouldn't be my last. I would have no memory of them until many years later.

This event happened on a cool, crisp, clear autumn evening in 1960. I was heading back home after dumping the trash at the city dump a few miles north of town. There was no roadside trash pickup in those days. Taking the trash to the city dump had become my weekly chore since I'd turned seventeen and gotten a car.

Dad had found a mint-condition 1947 four-door Dodge sedan for a mere fifty bucks. It looked to be brand spanking new, with not a scratch on it. A widow had been storing it in her garage since her husband had passed away several years earlier.

I had been working a couple paper routes for the past few years and had saved up the money to pay for the car and the insurance. At my age, pedaling a bike was getting embarrassing. Dad finally decided I had matured enough to drive a car.

I named her Betsy. She was a beauty, my pride and joy. But only for a day, as she would quickly turn into an embarrassment.

My very first stop was to pull into a gas station.

“Whut’ll it be?” Asked the attendant.

“Fill her up,” I said, with a big smile on my face. I was in seventh heaven and on cloud nine.

Not only did he fill her up, but the attendant checked my oil, the water in my radiator, and the air in my tires. He even cleaned the windows. You don’t get that type of service in the near future!

Later that evening, as I returned home from the city dump, I could see dust kicking up from the gravel road behind the car in the rearview mirror. The only sounds were those of the engine purring and the radio playing the “devil’s music,” which was what our parents were calling the new rock and roll sound. They were really going to come unglued when heavy metal would come out a few years later.

It was a peaceful evening, and there was not another car in sight. The stars were slowly making their appearance. There was no moon. I was dreaming about joining the navy in a few months, after I graduated from high school. My mind was a thousand miles away as I sailed the seven seas.

All of a sudden, my little dream evaporated as I noticed three blinking blue lights in my rearview mirror, rapidly approaching, in a tight formation. I couldn’t tell if they were on the road or in the air. They approached with blazing speed, and in the blink of an eye I had something tail gating me.

Whut the heck? Not even Superman cun travel that fast, I thought.

Dad burn it, some nut driving up my ass. Hey asshole ,back off. For crying out loud, read the darn driver’s manual. Ten miles per hour, for one car length.

You can probably tell that I’m a little pissed. Might be some road rage brewing here.

But who pays attention to the manual after they get their driver’s license? Certainly not the dude riding my tail. But that would just be the start of my problems with this tail gater, cause suddenly, my whole car started to vibrate. I felt a tingling sensation and every hair on my body stood straight up. Before I recognized what was happening , a humongous brilliant flash of colored light exploded within my head.

Confused and dazed, I realized the car was not moving.

How could that be?

Everything was still and quiet, except for the car engine, still purring, and the radio still playing that devil’s music. I sat with my hands glued to the steering wheel. My grip was so tight that I could feel the muscles in my forearms tighten. In the darkness I saw that the headlights were illuminating an embankment that ran alongside the road.

Holy cow! Whut in the world jest happened? I wondered.

I was shaking like a leaf on a windy day. The mind can play tricks in times of crisis, so I told myself to calm down and think. Because I was a teenager, thinking could sometimes be a new experience for me and could sometimes cause dangerous results, my folks had once told me.

Since the car's engine was still running, I decided I'd better haul ass and get on back home. The folks would be expecting me shortly.

I shifted to reverse and tried backing away from the embankment, but the rear tires would only spin. I began to smell burning rubber. This was not a good sign.

I realized that the front wheels were embedded in a ditch that ran along the embankment. I was not going anywhere.

Now what?

I looked around inside the car and noticed some bizarre sights. The front and driver's side windows were smashed, making them resemble giant spider webs. I tried opening the driver's door, but it wouldn't budge.

I tried the passenger door. It was stuck too. I tried pushing on it with my shoulder. It wouldn't budge. Next I tried kicking it. It was being very contrary.

Frustrated, I crawled into the backseat. Both back doors were jammed shut too. I started to panic, and this made me mad. I kicked on both doors and cursed (good thing the folks couldn't hear me), but that didn't help, either. I still couldn't get any of the doors to budge.

Okay Tommy, pipe down and think.

I took a deep breath, told myself to relax, and decided to crawl back in front. There had to be a way to get out of the car. I tried to roll the window down. It was stuck. All the windows were stuck. That's when I again noticed the spider glass driver's side window. That just might be an escape route. After several kicks, each one a little harder than the last, and a few more curse words, the window finally gave way.

I crawled out of the car, staggered around a bit, and tried to collect my wits. I just happened to look to the sky and saw a full moon. Beside the moon were three small blinking blue lights, which flew off in formation and then disappeared into the night sky.

I didn't give what I saw much thought right then because when I looked at the car, I almost went into shock.

Holy shit!

I couldn't believe my eyes.

The moonlight and car's headlights lit up the area almost as if it were daylight. Betsy was a mess! She looked like something you'd drive in a demolition derby, or something that had just come out of a junkyard! How can this be?

The first thing that stood out, like a sore thumb, was that the door handles were missing, both front and back. It appeared that they had been sawed off.

No wonder the doors wouldn't open.

The rest of the car was covered with dust, dents, and scrapes, front to back. The back fender was bent into the rear tire.

I walked around and inspected the car from several other angles. The back was perfectly normal, and the rear lights were still shining. The passenger side, however, looked the same as the driver's side. The door handles were missing, and the car was dented and scraped from front to back.

The front of the car also looked normal, except that the sun visor on the driver's side was crumbled and torn loose. Chrome strips were missing from nearly every part of Betsy. Without her makeup, poor Betsy was hardly recognizable.

Whut in the world could have caused all that damage?

I could only imagine what had happened. The car had to have skidded on each of its sides, possibly turning over and landing back upright with the front wheels embedded in the ditch that ran alongside the road. If the car had done all that, though, then how could I have stayed seated behind the steering wheel? The 1947 model automobiles had no seat belts or air bags.

None of this was making sense.

Since the car was still running, I figured I might as well try one more time to back out of the ditch. But first, I pulled the fender off the rear tire. I climbed back through the car window, put Betsy in reverse, and again tried backing up. The rear wheels spun and the smell of burning rubber once again filled the air. I tried rocking the car, to no avail. The front wheels were too deep in the ditch.

Now whut... I was fit to be tied.

I had run out of ideas and had just about given up hope when I noticed a set of headlights coming down the road towards me.

"Need some help, sonny?" Asked a farmer, sitting on his tractor.

"Yes, sir. I sure do. Think yew cun pull my car out of the ditch?" I asked.

"Let's give it a shot," the farmer said.

Luckily, he had a chain. I helped him hook it to the car's fender, and the tractor pulled the car out quite easily.

"Jesus, sonny, whut in God's name happened here?" He asked, after surveying the car.

"Guess I must of had an accident," I replied.

"You don't say! The road's done torn up near half a mile back. There's debris scattered 'bout everywhere," he said, as he shook his head in disbelief.

"Cun't imagine how the darn thing is still a-runnin'."

"Yeah, me either," I said.

"Don't look like yew is hurt none," he said, as he looked me over.

"Reckon not," I replied, even though I felt my left elbow stiffening up.

"Must of been yew'en headlights I saw a-shinin' in the sky back yonder. I wuz a-wonderin' where those strange lights were a-comin' from. Yew is one lucky kid," the farmer said as he scratched his head.

“I reckon so. Much obliged for your help. I best be a-gettin’ back home. My pa will be wonderin’ what’s taking me so long.” I replied.

“No problem, boy. Yew jest best take it slow. No tellin’ whut else might fall off.”

“Yes, sir. I will,” I said.

The farmer climbed back on his tractor and putted on down the road. I could hear him mumbling to himself. Something ‘bout “city folks”.

I climbed back through the busted window and started the dreaded trip home.

Shit, how am I ever going to explain this to dad, when I can’t explain it to myself? I wondered.

It would be many years before I was to discover what had actually happened.

Just as I came to the city limits, I passed a police car parked alongside the road, facing in my direction. As I passed, going real slow, the officer looked up. He probably couldn’t believe what he saw. His eyes opened real wide and he started choking on the bite of sandwich he had just taken.

All I could think to do was wave: “Evenin’, Officer Cooper.” He must have been real hungry, because I made it home without him pursuing me.

Teenagers tend to hide things from their folks. That seems to be a common occurrence in every generation. What the folks don’t know won’t hurt them, or more, properly put, what the folks don’t know won’t hurt the teenager. Unfortunately, there would be no way I could hide this from my folks. I sat in the driveway for a few minutes, working up my nerve to go into the house.

As soon as I opened the front door, Dad was on me like a fly on shit.

“Where is yew been, Bud? It’s been darn’t near three hours since yew left,” he hollered at me. When I was in trouble, dad always called me ‘Bud’.

Three hours! I hadn’t realized it had been that long.

“I had a slight car accident,” I weakly confessed.

“An accident!” he shouted, as he rushed outside to see what I was talking about. The expression on his face, when he saw the car, would have stopped a grandfather clock.

“Whut in Sam Hill happened?” He asked.

“Don’t really know, Pop. Maybe I hit a pothole and it caused the car to turn over,” I lied, grasping at a straw.

“Yew is not hurt?”

“No, I reckon not,” I replied.

“Well, it’s well past your bedtime boy. We’ll talk ‘bout this in the mornin’,” he said, still shaking his head and mumbling something I didn’t quite make out, except for the word, “teenagers.”

As I prepared to take a bath (we had no shower in those days), I noticed dried blood on my left shirt sleeve. I looked at my elbow and arm, but saw no blood. In the mirror I could see a two-inch scratch on my elbow. It wasn’t bleeding and looked to be almost healed. Then I remembered the car’s smashed side door window. My elbow must have hit it.

So why was there blood only on the shirt and not my arm? And the scratch looked to be almost healed?

Also in the mirror I noticed that my right upper forearm was bruised. Looking closer, I saw a pattern that resembled the hand print of a small child, but there were just three fingers and a thumb. I noticed the exact same bruise and pattern on my left forearm.

I sat on the stool and bent down to untie my tennis shoes. At first I couldn't get them untied. They were tied in a strange and unfamiliar knot. I finally figured out how to get the knot undone and removed my shoes and socks.

I noticed that my left big toe was tender and bruised. I sure didn't remember stubbing it. I reminded myself that I had just been in an accident, so I was bound to have a few bumps and bruises.

A few years later I developed a toenail fungus on that same toe. I would eventually discover that was where the abductors implanted the tracking device.

As I removed my undershirt and underpants, I noticed that the labels were on the outside. I had been wearing them inside out.

How had that happened?

I was too tired to ponder the questions, so I took my bath and went to bed.

The next morning my folks noticed that I wasn't wearing my eyeglasses. I had had to wear them since the third grade. I thought I had them on, as I was seeing just fine. When I got them and put them on, my eyesight became blurred, as if I had them off. When I removed the glasses, it was as if I had them on.

Whut the heck is going on here?

My parents thought I was joshing, but when I read the headlines in the newspaper from across the room, they were convinced. I was happy. It was a dream come true, cause I was no longer Tommy four eyes.

Also that morning, unbeknownst to me, the local radio station was reporting that several people had called and reported strange lights in the sky out by the city dump the night before.

Dad was as confused as I was about how a car could have almost the exact same type of damage on both sides and none in the front or back.

The next morning he drove out to examine the area where I told him I had had the accident. He was gone a long time. When he finally returned, all he said was, "Give me the car key. You're grounded."

I reckon he didn't find any potholes.

The following morning, I awoke with blood in my underpants. Young boys my age were known to have wet dreams and I must have had a dilly. There was blood in my semen.

Mom discovered the blood while doing the laundry. I was taken to the doctor. He concluded that something must have been stuck up into my penis. My urethra seemed to be damaged. He said not to worry, as it would heal itself in a few days.

I had a hard time explaining to the folks that I had no idea what the doctor was talking about. Teenagers could do weird things, even in those days, but sticking something up my penis?

Come on, man.

I cringed just thinking about it.

A week later dad returned the car keys. He had fixed the car enough for it to be street legal to drive. Since I would be leaving for the navy in the spring, he couldn't see spending the money to fix the dents and scrapes. Betsy became known as the Bad Mobile, but as bad as that car looked, there was no way was I going back to pedaling the bike.

Dad never did tell me what he found when he went to check the accident area. He must have found something, because when I asked him about it years later, he got the strangest look on his face. He stared off into space, probing for an answer. After what seemed like an eternity, he looked me straight in the eye and asked, "How can I explain something that I don't understand?" We never talked about the incident again.

Behold: The Comeback Kid's legacy has begun.

CHAPTER TWO

The Inauguration

NEW KID IN TOWN

Great expectations, everybody's watching you. Johnny come lately, the new kid in town. Everybody loves you, so don't let them down. . . Everybody's talking about the new kid in town.
—The Eagles

Every story has a beginning. Mine started with a twinkle in my Dad's eye. I was born Thomas Leonard Hay, on April 15, 1943, at the University of Kansas Hospital in Kansas City, Kansas. My surname descended from William de la Haye, Butler of Scotland. In ancient times the use of a badge or sign was used to mark a tribe or individual. A family might revere a plant or tree because it was the plant of its God. The Hay clan plant badge was a mistletoe.

If you should venture to Scotland - here are a few Scottish words that may come in handy:

"Scummindooncatzzandugs," which means: "The rain is indeed quite heavy."

"Sslikedeedawinter," which means: "This summer weather is like the Alps in winter."

"Achawishwidd-steyedathame," which means: "We should have stayed home."

My grandfather was Elijah Monroe (EM) Hay and my father was Leonard Monroe Hay. One of my favorite celebrities would be Marilyn Monroe. Remember the name Monroe. It will characterize my legacy.

Mom and Dad were separated at the time. It had something to do with the world at war. Dad was an aircraft mechanic in the Army Air Force, stationed in England. He received a few days leave to come home and see me when I was about six months old. After that, he didn't see me again until after the war.

Following the war, my parents settled in Clinton, Missouri, where dad had been raised. Clinton was in Henry County, known as the Golden Valley. In the 1950s, Clinton was the baby chick

capital of the world. 110 million chicks were hatched there annually. Clinton's fresh air and pure natural water provided the ideal climate for producing healthy chicks.

Clinton was also known for having the third-largest business "square" in the world. It was a typical small Midwestern town, where everyone knew everything about everyone else. There were no secrets in Clinton, or were there?

RUNAWAY

As I walk along, I wonder what went wrong. . Tears are fallin' and I feel the pain.—Del Shannon

"Come on, Flip," I shouted at the mangy mixed-breed mutt following me. There weren't many purebred dogs in those days.

He wagged his tail as he caught up with his friend. I don't know why, but at the age of four, I was running away from home. This would be my first memory.

I was walking down the middle of the railroad tracks, about a half mile outside of town, carrying a small pillowcase packed with my meager belongings. I had no idea where I might be headed or from what I was running. I just knew I had to get away.

"There he is! We found him," I heard someone shout in the distance.

"Tommy, where yew think yew is a-goin'?"

Grandpa had noticed I was missing and had the whole family out looking for me. I couldn't understand what all the fuss was about when they found me. Nobody seemed to care about me before, so I had figured I wouldn't be missed. After all, I was just one of many faces my grandparents had to feed.

My relatives were in a panic because just a few months earlier, two children about my age had wandered off in the same area and had drowned in a pond nearby. Everyone was relieved that I was safe, but after the dust had settled, it didn't keep me from getting my first whupplin'.

THE WAY WE WERE

Memories, like the corners of my mind. Misty water-colored memories of the way we were.—Barbara Streisand

Within the next four years, Mom and Dad gave me three sisters, Sandra, Barbara, and Susan. The folks must then have discovered what was causing all the siblings, because after Susan there were no more. Or so I thought at the time.

We were raised in a house across the street from Franklin Elementary School. The school playground became our own private playground. It was an ideal location to raise a family.

The neighborhood kids played all sorts of games, including marbles, lids, red rover, London Bridge, horseshoes, hopscotch, basketball, dodge ball, kick the can, football, and my favorite, baseball. We would spend hours doing the hula hoop. Very few of us were overweight, because we didn't sit inside and play video games all day. All our games were reality games.

We climbed trees and caught lightning bugs and even honey bees in our bare hands. The challenge with the bees was to keep from getting stung. I lost the challenge more than once.

In the third grade my teacher noticed me squinting when looking at the blackboard. She told my parents that I should get my eyes checked. Sure enough, I was nearsighted. I became Tommy four-eyes and started feeling like an ugly duckling. Not many kids had to wear glasses in those

days. Why, I wondered, was I the only one in the family with poor eyesight? Anyhow, it didn't stop me from playing my favorite sport.

IT'S ALL IN THE GAME

Many a tear has to fall, but it's all in the game.—Nat King Cole

IOOF Team Having Uphill Struggle, read the sports headlines in the local newspaper, The Clinton Eye. “We're not winning many games, but the boys are improving,” said our little league manager, Don Blystone. He agreed that the main objective was to develop sportsmanship, but suggested it would be good for team morale to win a game occasionally. In those days we kids played with our folks yelling and screaming for us, not at us.

Baseball was the love of my life growing up. Even today it is still my favorite sport. At the age of seven, I became a diehard St. Louis Cardinals fan. They were the only professional baseball team west of the Mississippi. My grandpa got me hooked on them, and we listened to many of their games on the radio together.

“There it goes. It might be, it could be, IT IS, A HOME RUN! HOLY COW”, Harry Caray would shout. Stan ‘The Man’ Musial hit five homers in the doubleheader that day in 1954.

Baseball was my outlet for a serious problem that was arising.

BAD MOON RISING

I see the bad moon arising. I see trouble on the way. I see hurricanes and lightning. I see bad times today. . . There's a bad moon on the rise.—Credence Clearwater Revival

Everyone had chores. My main chore was mowing the lawn with a push mower. We had a big lawn and it seemed to take forever to mow. I would visit the house in my adult years and couldn't believe how much smaller the lawn was then I remembered it.

Sometimes, by mistake, I would mow over Mom's flowers. Some of them looked like weeds to me. Honestly, they did. Of course, I couldn't convince Mom of this, and she would get mad at me. But then, Mom seemed to be upset with me no matter what I did. I just couldn't do anything to please her. I started to believe that she didn't like me, but I couldn't understand why. Maybe, I thought, it was because I was the oldest, the only boy, or the ugly duckling.

I hardly ever heard my folks argue, but when they did, it was always about me. I never heard them arguing about my sisters. It seemed they could do no wrong. In any disputes I had with my sisters, Mom would always side with them. I started to feel like I was the black sheep of the family.

However, at the time, I wasn't aware of all the circumstances my folks were dealing with. My differences with Mom even led me to believe that she was trying to do me harm, at one point.

Clinton had one public swimming pool. One day, Mom decided to teach me to swim. Instead of holding me up, though, it seemed to me that she was trying to drown me.

In a panic, I started screaming, “Help! Help! She's trying to drown me.”

My screaming raised a few eyebrows.

This must have made her mad and she did dunk me. From this point on, I would never get close to her again while in the water. I was becoming fearful of her in more ways than one. Can't ever remember her giving me a hug or saying “I love you.”

FAMILY TRADITION

Country music singers have always been a real close family. . . I am very proud of my daddy's name. . . It's a family tradition. —Hank Williams Jr.

The whole family came to the dinner table for meals. We always ate at home. None of us had ever heard of McDonalds. Fast food was when you were in a hurry to eat so you could get back to playing. The call for dinner wasn't on a cell phone. Dad whistled. You'd better be in range and come running or you would go hungry.

Mom decided what we ate and prepared the meals. If I didn't like what she put on my plate, I was allowed to sit there until I did. Everyone's plate had to be clean before anyone could be excused.

Dinner was also a time to share the day's events. Had to watch what I said or I might have gotten myself in a fix.

We had no air conditioning, only fans to circulate the hot air. There was no shower, except when it would rain. We had to take a bath once a week, whether we needed it or not. We had to share the same bath water. Since I was the only boy, or probably because I was always the dirtiest, I went last. My sisters would torment me, saying that they had peed in the water. I could only hope that they were lying, since I had no other choice. But I'd get my revenge by putting bugs in their bed. Their horrendous shrieks had me grinning ear to ear.

We didn't have a TV until I was fourteen, and when we did get one it was a black-and-white, nineteen-inch RCA model that seemed to take forever to warm up. There were two stations, and they went off the air at midnight, after playing the national anthem and a poem about God. The stations would come back on the air at 6:00 a.m. Funny how now days there are over five hundred channels that broadcast every day, round the clock, and I can't seem to find anything worthwhile to watch.

Can you believe that someone had to actually get off their butt to adjust the sound or change channels? Some of my favorite programs were: *The Lone Ranger*, *Twilight Zone*, *Superman*, *Red Skelton*, and *The Rifleman*.

The first movie I saw was *Love Me Tender*. Elvis had all the silly girls screaming so much that I could barely hear the movie. The world newsreel and a cartoon were shown before the movie. There were no advertisements, previews, or trailers.

Mom bought our clothes. I never had any say in what I wore. I wore it or went naked. But then, naked wasn't really a choice. I wore the same pair of jeans until they were full of holes and about to fall apart. I should have saved them. My grandkids today would have paid dearly for them.

The folks didn't have to put up with fagging. After all, who would be so stupid as to make it easier for them to swat your butt? Not I. They swatted my behind enough without me inviting them.

To mail a letter cost ten cents. Twenty-five cents bought a malt at the Dairy Queen. Black walnut was my favorite. Gas for the car was twenty-nine cents a gallon. Haircuts were fifty cents. The monthly grocery bill was around a hundred dollars. Families lived on one parent's income and had only one car. You're probably wondering how in the world we survived.

Only one rotary-dial telephone hung from the wall, and it had a party line. If another party happened to be on the line when you wanted to make a call, you'd have to wait until they were

finished. We always had to ask permission just to look at the phone. It must have been a dumb phone though, because today the phones are so 'smart'.

To do anything or go anywhere, I had to ask permission. Dad would take forever to make up his mind.

Patience grasshopper.

I wasn't aware of it at the time, but I reckon he was teaching me patience.

It was the night before Christmas and all through the house, anxious little creatures were stirring, along with the mice. Thanks to our parents, Christmas was always a special time of year. They always managed to surprise us. Dad probably spent most of the night assembling the toys. We each got two, or at the most three, presents each year.

There was no chimney for Santa, so we had to leave the front door unlocked. But then, I can't remember the front door or any other door in the house ever having a lock.

Every Memorial Day the entire family, including grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins, would travel to Springfield, Missouri, to visit and put flowers on family members' graves. Afterwards, everyone would gather at Uncle Perry's. He and grandpa would play a fiddle and everyone would dance.

Dad's side of the family would get together at his parents' (my grandparents) home, at least once a month. They lived on a farm a few miles south of Clinton. There were many cousins to play with. I did a lot of hunting and fishing. Grandma would cook our game, but it was her chicken and dumplings that I liked best.

It was at their farm that I would get into another situation that would cause me bodily harm. All the cousins were playing a game of Cowboys and Indians one day. I was an Indian. The Cowboys were holed up in the middle of a field, in a fort made from bales of hay. The Indians found it impossible to sneak up on them without being seen, so I came up with a brilliant plan: "Let's burn 'em out!" At that the field was set on fire.

That didn't go over so well, as the adults all came running out of the house when someone yelled "FAHR!" Everyone grabbed a water hose and started straying the fire.

"Who started that fahr?" Grandpa asked.

The next thing I knew, all fingers were pointing at yours truly.

"Tommy did it," they all shouted.

There was nowhere to run or hide.

That little adventure got me a few welts on my behind and a stern scolding in front of all my relatives.

Don't get the wrong idea here, it's not that I was a bad kid growing up. I was just a little adventurous, or ornery, as some would say. It would be a trait that plagues me to this day.

I wonder where that might have come from, and what might have caused it? Feeling a little unwanted might of had something to do with it.

So to try and keep out of trouble, I played a lot of baseball.

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