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Disclaimer

This book is a documentation of true events. True events as they happen in life, unfortunately, do not end up being the truth. Human beings, by nature, embellish; it's just that simple. My day to day living exposed me to people struggling to survive in an uncharted world. Like all of us, I was forced to accept all considered proposed truths with the proverbial grain of salt.

We, as a civilized society, are faced with a very serious responsibility. This responsibility is to become involved at the point that a fellow citizen is most likely to be put in harm's way. There is absolutely no gray area when we find ourselves aware of an injustice. We are compelled by humanity to do the right thing. We are a society founded on law. Countless agencies are established for the sole purpose of investigating citizen's reports of suspicious activities.

Had I been successful in provoking just one of the appropriate authorities into performing their sworn duty, the many tragedies in this story would have been averted.

My disclaimer is simple. The events I describe herein are, to the best of my knowledge, truthful and/or accurate as they were presented to me. I merely present them in the hope to stimulate any and all involvement that would bring justice or fairness to those injured parties or, unfortunately at this time, reparations to their remaining loved ones. Fortunately, there is an extreme abundance of documented evidence to substantiate the facts.

I find little comfort due to the fact that I cannot help the victims at this late date, but the abundance of documentation is comforting. I look forward to the opportunity to establish all of the documented facts into a record.

NOTE: Individual names contained in this story have been changed, with the exclusion of the principal characters and public figures.

INTRODUCTION

In a perfect world, all great stories would be experienced only by individuals who are blessed with extraordinary writing skills. Thank God, we don't live in a perfect world. The stories I am presenting to you, in my most humble of opinions, can stand on their own merits, and subsequently I present them to you in a simple request that you tolerate my simplistic writing skills. Had I known that my life path would have taken me on this extraordinary journey, I would have prepared myself with the appropriate education to do justice for my experiences. The conundrum is almost silly in its consideration, simply because with that degree of education, I would have chosen not to be a party to the events I am going to present to you.

I also must apologize for the meandering that you will immediately recognize from chapter to chapter. If one chooses to write fiction they delegate the beginning, the middle, and the end of their creation with absolute power. I, on the other hand, am faced with the reality that I am actually documenting events as they presented themselves to me. I have no doubt that a professional writer would choose to review each chapter and edit it for the purpose of presenting a story as it should have happened. I did not, and could not choose to edit that way, simply because I could not edit my life.

If you take anything away from this story it should simply be that life is totally unpredictable. To paraphrase a quote from a mind considerably sharper than mine let me state, "Every time a person makes a plan, God laughs."

I have the responsibility to provide a dedication, I believe there is a reason that they place a dedication in the front of a book. You will totally understand my dedication upon turning the last page. I dedicate this book to Las Vegas, Nevada. Not the geographic location, because quite frankly that's nothing more than another place on the map. This dedication is directed to the surreal Las Vegas of the mind, that magical mystique that brings together very few saints, destined to be cannibalized in every conceivable way, by a never ending supply of sinners.

CHAPTER ONE

Let's start out with an easy one, what comes to mind when you think of that dreaded phone call? I'm sure you know what I'm talking about, we all have in our mind that particular phone call. Mine, personally, are pretty standard; a fire, an accident, heart attack, death in the family, or even the phone ringing on the day you make the 12th payment on your successful vasectomy and it's the doctor informing you that your wife is six weeks pregnant. You get my drift, one of those dreaded phone calls.

I got a totally unexpected, but strangely dreaded phone call one evening that just fits in its own special category. The phone rang, I answered it, and it was my buddy, Jim. So far, quite innocent and routine. In those days Jim would call me and we would get together at the local sports bar for drinks and the best Buffalo wings in town. But this, it turns out, wasn't a routine phone call.

Without any warning, Jim just spits it out. For me to hear his question was devastating, literally life altering. His question started out innocently enough, he simply asked me if I would accompany him to a support meeting. I had hung out with Jim for quite a while, so I was far from surprised that he was considering going to a support group. He could spend the rest of his life attending God knows how many different, support groups. I was extremely curious to see exactly which of his many issues he was finally deciding to address. His choice, and my participation, was the part that rocked my world. His decided problem was for him totally appropriate, if not long overdue. As for him putting me into the equation, well that was the last thing I wanted to hear. Every illusion I had carried with me for over 20 years, in an instant simply evaporated.

He said, "I want you to go with me to an **Over-eaters** Anonymous meeting." Now I had no problem understanding his desire to attend a meeting or two, but I really wanted to be confused as to why he would select me to join him. For the briefest moment, I considered he might quite innocently just need a designated driver, but try as I might, I couldn't even put that together. As I say, for over 20 years I really tried to avoid the obvious fact. In reality, he actually did say join me, not drive me. Truth is, of course, I had noticed in the mornings when I stood in front of my bathroom mirror I seriously considered having it etched with "objects are actually

smaller than they appear.” I believed that would have relieved the anxiety I felt when I observed how much I had physically expanded since my youth. Of course, such an etching would have caused much more serious trauma when observing the reflection of my other physical attributes.

I quickly convinced myself he actually did only need a ride and so, for no other reason, I agreed to go.

It is hard to describe the experience of one of these meetings. You really have to go to one to understand the shock. It is kind of surreal, a strangely bizarre, and for me personally, an overwhelming first impression. You first enter a meeting hall that is designed for your run-of-the-mill regular size people that is now full of over eaters.

Now I have been in crowded rooms, I’m talking wall-to-wall people. This was my first experience to be in a room full of wall-to-wall persons. My first observation was actually relief when I realized that the meeting room was actually on the ground floor. Fact is, if it were on an upper floor, it would not have remained there long. At the time we arrived, it seemed like even the ground floor was about three or four over-eaters away from cracking open and swallowing up all of us.

My gut reaction was realizing immediately just how far off base they were with the name they had chosen for the group. There are a lot of dysfunctions that one can have and still remain anonymous. Over-eating isn’t one of them. I’m sure that Noah would have been aware of their presence even if they had a meeting called Elephants Anonymous. There was absolutely no anonymity in this meeting hall.

The scene, as I say, was surreal; to describe it one would consider flowing ripples of eclectic colors and fabrics blending and merging into each other. A blur of stripes and patterns of clothing suspended about a foot above the floor by random, tiny sets of feet corresponding in direct parallel with chubby little heads. Above the chatter of this humongous crowd of very few people, came a directive for all to take their seats. As if magical, the flowing fabric parted in the middle to reveal, from the door where I was standing, several rolls of very frightened, small, flimsy folding chairs. This could get very ugly, very fast.

Miraculously, let me interject another thought here, if we are indeed made in God's likeness, you can be sure with this group, that the pearly gates are quite accommodating; never the less, miraculously, everyone engulfs their chairs without incident.

As everyone continues to settle in, some continuing to settle more than others, I surveyed the room and thought to myself, "This may be the first time in my total adult life that somebody may actually address me as 'Skinny'." But as it turns out, they don't address you with fun names.

While I'm thinking of the weirdness of this particular situation, the guy in charge of the meeting, not the big shot, but in this case, a really big shot, starts the meeting by asking for an introduction. Without hesitation the first guy in the front row struggles desperately to stand up and announces his name, Frank, and the fact that he is, here's a big surprise, an over-eater. The group automatically, in unison, declares, "Hi, Frank." With that, Frank assaults his folding chair. The next person, timing the descent of Frank and using it as a catapult to assist himself, stands up and announces his name and the obvious fact that he also is an over-eater. Once again, all of us in unison declare his presence with a hearty howdy.

This continues down the first row, then to the second row, and halfway down the third row, where they come upon my friend, Jim. With his usual awkward hesitation, Jim slowly stands up and admits sadly to the world that he is Jim by name, and shamefully, also an over-eater. In total disgrace he quickly sits down and all eyes turned to me. I immediately jumped to my feet and with as much pride as I could muster, announced to the world, "I'm Jack, and I'm this fat guy's ride!" Sharply pointing to Jim and with absolute pride, I sit right back down without missing a beat and direct my full attention to the extremely confused chubby guy seated next to me. As I totally expected, all these rotund people gasped at the same time. Heck, maybe it was because somebody noticed there were no donuts to go along with the coffee in the back. It sure the hell could not have been because of anything I said, right?

As I said, I was well aware of the reaction. In that brief moment that the group was contemplating how to take my off-the-wall remark, I had time to consider my options. I always had time to consider my options. In this particular case, my situation was kind of like that steel ball in a pinball game. I realized that if I had to make a run for it, I could get seriously

damaged bouncing off the many large-size pastel bumpers before I successfully exited out of the back door. I wasn't really too concerned, I had been in this position before. Quite often in fact, but even so, I always used the time to orchestrate a "Plan B".

A "Plan B" was not necessary in this case, because it turns out it is true, these full time residents of the buffet lines are indeed a jolly bunch. I was relieved as the belly laughs erupted throughout the room. I also took note that this was the first time in my life that my ill advised, politically incorrect, sarcasm was appreciated on what can only be called a seismic appreciation.

Sensing the time was right to move on, the guy next to me, confused as to how he ended up being my straight man, stood up and introduced himself. With the acknowledgment of a simple "hi", the meeting continued normally. Normally was a condition that I seldom enjoyed or tolerated, but because I was new in this game, I chose to attempt to behave. Also, as a first timer I figured I'd disrupted the meeting enough.

I successfully maintained my best behavior until the leader announced the closing of the session. At that time, from the front row, a woman's considerably flabby arm rippled towards the ceiling. Immediately acknowledged by the leader, trust me, nobody was going to miss it, the lady suggested an activity that was practiced at her other support meetings.

She explained that at her Alcoholic Anonymous, Substance Abusers Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, and if I remember right, Doberman Humpers Anonymous, they all closed the meetings with a group hug. I couldn't let this one go by. I think in baseball terms, they call this, "A slow one right down the middle of the plate." I responded to the crowd, "We would have to move the meeting to the middle of the desert to accommodate this crowd in a group hug." Meeting adjourned.

After that one time, Jim strangely never talked about what happened. He also never invited me to go to another meeting. I tell this story as an example of how what you are about to read could happen.

You see, I not only wrote this book, but afterwards I actually took the time to read it. I tried to read it in the same context that I assume you will read it. Somewhere along the story, I myself, the actual guy who lived

through it, started to wonder what possible social deficiency could support the activities detailed on these pages. I don't know if I am so used to it that I don't think about it, or quite possibly so comfortable with it that I didn't want to admit it. The fact is, I do know exactly what particular personality quirk I possess that literally creates the glue that holds this story together.

I'm going to say it straight out. No bullshit, if you can grasp this philosophy, you will totally understand everything you are about to read.

I was born, raised, and much to the despair of those in my life, continue to be to this moment, a total wise-ass. This is the essence of my life, so let me say it again, I'm a smart-ass. To avoid future confusion, wise-ass and smart-ass are synonyms, both equally irritating. You can look it up, it's actually in the dictionary. Wise-ass, a vulgar slang, smart-ass. No, my picture is not there, but it could be.

Now you may wonder how you can be born a wise-ass, well that's kind of self-explanatory. It actually proves I am what I say, only a wise-ass would claim he could be born that way. I do remember hearing that at the time of my birth, it was said that when my mother asked the doctor "What is it?" He said, "It's a boy, and I don't appreciate his attitude." The reason for that was because my first memorable thought, back at the time of my birth, when that doctor slapped my butt, I remember thinking to myself that with a slap as wimpy as that, that doctor was more of a pussy than the one I had just left. He damn well might have sensed my opinion.

As you read on, you will find out that I'm originally from upstate New York, the birthplace of the social activity one step below winter hibernation known as "cabin fever". I'm talking about such constant total boredom that mere mental survival depended on one's ability to self-medicate with humor, the more outrageous the better.

Throughout my formative years, all the social activities that I can remember involved get-togethers of individuals who were as hopelessly bored and depressed as the weather. This dysfunctional sadness was pretty much the constant. The only relief from their own misery centered around those select individuals who were an absolute necessity, simply because they were wise-asses.

These people were the salvation of any get-together. To a person, they were totally self-entertaining, and always absolutely hilarious. They were funny, always trying to disrupt any given situation with off-the-wall humor. They were also even more comical when their original efforts failed miserably. Like a pack of wolves, when a wise-ass missed his mark, all the others would pounce and destroy.

These people very quickly became my mentors, and of course, the highlight of my youth. It was my natural instinct that when I would hear that somebody was a total asshole, I would seek him or her out. I would make it my objective to hang with them until they uttered those magical words, “Boy! And I thought I was an asshole!” Sick as it sounds, that was always music to my ears. Not so much when they would end it by saying, “Get away from me!” But I was well aware of the rules.

Yes, there are smart-ass rules. One of them, I guess you could call the First Commandment, is that you always run the edge. A wise-ass remark is not worth saying if the recipient does not have to take a second or two to consider just how you meant what you said. The Second Commandment for wise-asses is also quite obvious. You are never allowed to say, “You know what I should have said.” No, to be a true wise-ass you must spend your life enduring those oh so frequent moments when you actually consider, “God, maybe I shouldn’t have said that!” The Third Commandment has always been very important to me. Never, absolutely never, intentionally pile on a victim to the point that your comic abuse forces them to get physical. To my knowledge, I have never violated this particular commandment.

I believe at this point in my life, I can proudly say I expect not only to be welcomed into wise-ass heaven, but I expect sainthood. St. Jack, the Patron Saint of Assholes. It does have a certain ring to it.

That’s enough egotistical masturbation. Let me get back to explaining my apprenticeship as a wise-ass in upstate New York. On those all-too-frequent, snowed-in winter nights, dank, gray, depressing, rain-drenched summer days, or those oh-so-rare, picture-perfect balmy evenings on the front porch, there was always a gathering of wise-asses. Endlessly trading hilarious anecdotes, hurtful and demeaning insults, and the ever present, I can’t believe you did that, practical jokes. This would continue to intensify until one or two individuals got so hurt that they stormed off, swearing to God to never return, at least, not until the next opportunity came along.

We were all fully aware of our addictions, so we all knew their reappearance was guaranteed. In anticipation of their return, it was a tradition for all the wise-asses to make plans for future assaults to further desecrate those poor souls. It was also understood that those offended, most likely would come up with some unique form of revenge themselves. Everyone, to a person, knew exactly how hurtful their remarks could be. They also understood it really was nothing more than good-natured competition. The world of wise-asses is absolutely no place for the thin-skinned or sensitive.

I am quite confident that history will back me up on this point. As gamblers breed gamblers, alcoholics breed alcoholics, abusers breed abusers, and teenagers breed anything that they can form into an orifice, then it stands to reason, wise-asses naturally breed wise-asses. My ancestry is saturated with them.

Although there are some females, by percentage, historically most wise-asses are males. Yes, I am aware, that there is probably another equally politically incorrect book in that simple statement right there, but it is true.

I perfected my own personal wise-ass skills around the people who socialized with my parents. Adults who have perfected their skills as a wise-ass are not only accepted, but they usually are welcome in just about any social situation. This is not so true for adolescents. I was so young when I pursued the wise-ass lifestyle that I can't really remember when it started. I did pursue some fundamental research into my past, where I was assured by those who knew me, I, unfortunately, was always irritating. This is an important fact to remember; wise-ass children are extremely irritating. Wise-ass adults on the other hand, when they are on top of their game, are extremely entertaining. An interesting reality of this condition is that most wise-asses unfortunately never grow up. Throughout my life I have heard the same question, "Why don't you grow up?" It is the way that I discovered the term, "rhetorical." You see, I know the answer; unfortunately the people who ask that question don't want to hear the answer. The reason I don't grow up is simple. All you grown up people out there are just so God damn boring. Do you really think I don't look at your lives? In my extremely limited religious education I agree with one point. God's main gift to his flock is choice. That's it, "choice." With that point in mind, I simply ask, "Why?" With the wonderful gift of choice, would you

so-called adults ever choose to be grown-ups? Boring! Face it, that one word, says it all.

When I was old enough, I would wander around my hometown alone, which I think because of my personality, my parents figured was around seven years old. At that time, my parent's favorite game in reference to me was "hide and don't seek". They were way ahead of the curve when it came to the concept of "don't ask, don't tell". In today's world that remark refers to one's sexual preferences. When it came to my parents, I think in my case, if they were given a choice, they might have taken gay over smart-ass. Thankfully, as a smart-ass, I limit things that suck to my attitude. I have one firm rule: the only thing I will poke at an asshole is fun.

As a kid, I naturally gravitated to those other wise-asses who were not only my age, but also dementedly sick bastards. These guys were equally irritating to the degree that they also were less than welcomed in their homes. We all had one thing in common; we were addicted to silliness. We couldn't help ourselves, anymore than the people who could not tolerate us could help themselves. As young as we were, and as eager as we were to hone our skills, it was always amazing to me that the more we alienated others because of our behavior, the more committed we became to each other. I myself began to live in an environment where, if I couldn't mouth off to my friends, I would simply mouth off to myself.

People around me were constantly puzzled as to why I would break up constantly during normal circumstances, for no apparent reason. It was even more noticeable at the most inappropriate moments. I was the product of two large families, so I attended my share of family reunions, weddings, graduations, and the most solemn of events, funerals. It was never a good idea to have me in the same room that has a dead guy in a box.

It got to the point that I couldn't wait to get around my cronies and share my observations. We all shared the same wavelengths, totally understanding the most ridiculous off the wall, convoluted perspectives on the world around us. For us, our shared time was light-years ahead of any TV or movies of the day. Let me share with you an example.

We would hang out at the local pizzeria. If we had money, we could go inside, share a pizza and a Pepsi, and the management would tolerate most of our shenanigans. I think they even figured our foolishness into their

pricing structure. When our money was exhausted we would just step outside and hang out on the corner. We would spend our time mocking those people who were fortunate enough to have the money to go in for their pizza and Pepsi. They all seemed to understand they had no choice but to pass through our gauntlet of silliness. This was our standard routine whenever we could get together.

Wise-asses do not like routine, way too boring. One night, the gods that control silliness, gave us a gift. Right across the street from the pizzeria, someone was building a brand new, modern, insurance office. Our hometown was not very familiar with any form of progress. They had coined a phrase for upstate New York at the time I was growing up; it was called “the Rust Belt.” The city fathers, in an attempt to promote the town, decided to put up a sign announcing entry at the city limits. After much discussion in regards to a slogan, they finally settled for “Sorry.”

Any form of new construction tended to only pop up after a conveniently planned, disastrous fire. This insurance office was the exception; it must have been people new to town because they were actually showing an effort and a rare amount of pride. A few of us, over the weeks, had noticed the construction as it was taking place. Our observations included the stacks of construction materials stored here and there on the site. As the building neared completion, we noticed the arrival of several typical construction pallets covered in black plastic. On one particular night, those pallets were now neatly stacked empty on the driveway, the black plastic was folded into neat squares, and a lawn of actual, green, perfect grass had materialized out of nowhere.

Being small-town boys, we had never seen such a thing as rolled up sod. This gave us an equally new experience, call it an opportunity. Even though we had never seen it before, we certainly knew what it was good for. For the next few hours, we meticulously rolled back up each individual section of perfect grass. We took each individual roll and neatly replaced it on its appropriate pallet, and concluded our evening by covering it neatly with the same black plastic.

In the world of true wise-asses, nothing more was necessary, and although we did hear around town about the response, it didn’t matter. Although most people considered it childish vandalism, that also didn’t matter. We just knew it had to be done. To us it was funny, and it would be

funny at least to us, forever. Forever meaning as long as we never grew up. Or got ourselves in such a successful position that we could afford rolled up grass, at least the kind you water and mow, an amount of grass too substantial to accommodate your typical Zig Zag paper. Good times, good times, life was good and silly. Sorry, that was redundant.

I would have been content to spend my remaining days, not only my childhood, but forever, right there on the street corner bullshitting with my buddies. But that was not to be.

Somewhere further into this story I will tell you about my adventures when my parents relocated to Florida. Age wise, I was around 12 years old when we moved to Florida. Maturity wise, I would guess somewhere around five or six years old. If you've been paying any attention at all, that means I had been wandering around, inflicting my wise-ass lifestyle on anybody I came in contact with, for more than four or five years.

Now here's a fact that just about anybody can relate to, a new kid in a new school. Now picture yourself as a young kid on his first day in a brand-new school in a backward, third world country that was called Florida in the 1950s. I don't know what you're imagining, but for me it was way past just pissing your pants and going home time. I certainly did not understand the kids I was looking at, but I could obviously see that they didn't understand, and had absolutely no intentions of making any effort to understand me.

My immediate decision was based solely on self-preservation. I was determined to become a part of the wallpaper. Instinct told me I had to disappear. For the next few weeks, which seemed to be more like centuries to me, I was forced to suppress my natural, dysfunctional, social habits. I had to forcibly suppress my natural tendency to fire off insulting jabs, irritating observations, and references to the unbelievable, albeit obvious, Neanderthal, backward dysfunctions of my fellow classmates. Honestly, I was in deep trouble. It was close to impossible to not respond, in some way, among these diehard rednecks. Every part of my new environment was a future breeding ground for the Dukes of Hazard. I can't tell you who wrote the movie "Deliverance" but I sure can tell you where they did the research.

The accepted description in Florida for the locals at that time was the word, crackers. I was too young to understand its reference, but it had a lot to do with inbreeding. I think I was fortunate because these inbreeds were

misreading my panic and fear for simple basic shyness. I was permanently in survival mode, I knew if I let my mouth run naturally with this crowd, I would immediately be nothing more than gator bait.

It was apparent early on that, as comfortable as I was back home on a street corner, these guys were equally comfortable in the abundant backwater swamp that was then that particular area of Florida. As it happens in every school, constantly, if one wants to survive, each child gravitates towards whatever pack that they feel best mirrors their personal deficiencies. Very quickly I found myself hanging with the shy, passive aggressive, future suicidal students.

There was an obvious culture shock between this type of student and what I was accustomed to with my northern wise-ass friends. That difference for me was that their conversations were so boring, bordering on comatose. Because of the total boredom, I was allowed plenty of time to contemplate this new world, and my place in it. Because of these contemplations, I was able to come to terms with my new lifestyle. All my changes were necessary because of my fears of getting the shit kicked out of me. Pure survival.

It was during one of these contemplation sessions that I came up with the decision to try a social experiment. I was still a wise-ass at home with my family, and in my heart. I also knew as I got more comfortable in school, most likely, my natural tendencies would start to show. Over the years I had gotten tired of being called an asshole. I also was tired of the non-wise-asses displaying their frustration for lack of a comeback, with a threat to invoke bodily harm. So with these thoughts in mind, I decided to consciously pursue the experience of those who chose to be quiet, meek, and mild. Now this was in days way before the establishment of Wise-asses' Anonymous. So there I was, in a world unfamiliar to me, trying to suppress my addiction and not a sponsor in sight.

Those who are familiar with the traits of a wise-ass have probably already figured out that this experiment was doomed from the beginning. I can remember the day, not *a* day, but actually *the* day, like it was, well, quite frankly, about 50 years ago. But I still remember it exactly. Let me set the scene.

It was in the morning and I was between classes. The school halls were stifling. It was the boring beginning of just one more hot, muggy, typical Florida day. I was walking between classes with my fellow students. This may be hard to comprehend but there was one issue that stood out. Well, actually there were two. First, most of them were barefoot, shoes identified you as a Yankee tourist. The other one, I will call this the second, a great many of them, now keep in mind, we're talking 12, 13 years old children, were knocked up. You didn't have to be a student in that school very long before you learned how to recognize the soon-to-be father. It's hard to describe the expression on the face of a very proud and virile brother.

Anyway, speaking of brother, as I was meandering to my next class, I noticed that the herd of inbreeds had somehow diverted from their usual trek. Now you want to remember, at this point I am socially experimenting as a meek conformist. I was just your typical one of the crowd. So as one of the crowd I trekked along. Also as one of the constantly curious, I hustled to the front of the pack. Up front I found, not the group that follows and never leads, but the two other groups that are also prevalent in all schools. As I came up on the backs of the lead students, I immediately recognized the jocks and the bullies. What a curious sight, natural enemies united in an allegiance for some yet unknown purpose.

It had only been a scant few weeks ago that I was petrified that these two exact groups were quite possibly going to be the last abusers I would ever see in my life. I was relieved, at this point, to be looking at their backs and not facing them toe to toe. Basic fear of a sudden death told me to stay behind this obvious mob of puberty-motivated death squad. Trust me, if you don't understand that I am not over exaggerating the pressures of a normal student in school, well then you must have gone to Catholic school. If you are one of these Catholic minorities, just remove the puberty-motivated death squad, and imagine an elderly, sex starved nun. Now you know the degree of fear I'm talking about.

My curiosity, of course, brought me to the head of the pack. My common sense held me right behind the future population of Florida's penal system. I had to know what would bring all the school to this part of the campus at this time of the day. As we got to the cafeteria I could see over all the heads that the door to the cafeteria had flown open. As the door closed quite abruptly, everybody formed into an impromptu mob scene. Realizing I

was the only confused person, social experiment or not, I just had to ask. So with the meekest voice I could conjure up, I asked, "What's going on?"

The answer came from one of the school bullies. You want to remember this is Florida in the late 50's. The bully stated with a disgust that told me that I should have known. "A nigger kid came right into our school!" Now I know today that's not a politically correct remark, and if you're wondering why it's not now politically correct, it is for the exact reason that in Florida in the late 50's, for some sick reason, it was politically correct. It was not only politically correct, but for these kids it was compulsory.

I want you to put yourself in my place. Here I am a wise-ass pretending to be a meek and mild introvert. Well, there was no way I was going to survive if I didn't say something. I don't know what got into me, but this is what I said, "God damn it, that's it! We ain't gonna stand for this shit! How about I go and get a Goddamn rope. You guys keep him here till I get back. Then y'all can go put on your sheets and pointy hats. It's time for a good old-fashioned lynching! I think it would be best if I be the one to hang him. You guys don't want to go home and tell your fathers that there is a good chance that you might have just strung up your own step brother!"

Here I am again. If you have any experience as a wise-ass, you know exactly what happened next. Everyone, that complete mob, as a group, stopped breathing, and as they slowly processed what they had heard, I knew they were contemplating that fine line between gross insult and hilarious retort. Thank God for me I had underestimated Darwin's theory. It was like a wave coming to shore. The lead bully, Mr. Macho himself, decided what I had uttered was over-the-top funny. So instead of declaring a double lynching, he just broke into hilarious laughter. Immediately, all his sheep followed his lead by also laughing their asses off. Just like that, my fear of an instant and painful demise subsided. I also noticed that while the mob was sharing a good laugh, the intruder had taken advantage of the diversion, and quite wisely, exited the lunchroom and simply wandered off.

In that instant I was back, life's natural order, I was class clown again. Let's face it, I never was good at suppressing my wise-ass nature in the first place, and truth be told, I had never been so god damn bored in my life. The downside was from that moment on, I was expected to be a wise-ass whenever it was inappropriate. But trust me, it is my natural state, and I

know it will be the one factor that will sustain me to my last days. It is a philosophy I highly advocate for all.

As you read on, if at any point you suffer from confusion just remember, page after page, if puzzled, the answer, hopefully, is the author just happens to be a habitual wise-ass.

CHAPTER TWO

Being a wise-ass is the key to the puzzle that is my personality. But I also possess what I like to consider a laid-back philosophy. Laid back to the extent that it is easily described with one simple word.

K-I-S-S! That great, simple phrase of absolute wisdom came into my vocabulary around ten years ago. Even though I had never heard it put that way, fact is, for as long as I can remember, that concept has been my game plan for my life. My total philosophy “K-I-S-S” stands for “KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID!”

As I have already explained, in my youth I referred to this philosophy as pretty much an ongoing joke. Yes, my fellow wise-asses and I refused to take anything serious. We were not the only ones striving for a carefree attitude.

Hell! In those days, just about everybody tried to treat everything as a joke. Reality was far from simple. Our generation was dealing with the Vietnam War and everything that came with it. Taking things too serious was just too heavy a load to carry.

Now with that era totally faded from my rearview mirror, I've reached the point in life where I realize keeping it simple is far from a joke; in fact, in my case, thank God, adopting a carefree philosophy is most likely the only reason I survive today.

My total life plan consists entirely of just two basic steps. First step was to never retire. This may sound rather trivial, but trust me, it's not. Right from very early in my youth I was well aware of the importance of having a work ethic. I was equally well aware of how many people retired and almost immediately drifted into deep depression or death.

The second step was to simply pick a point in my life and crank back or eliminate all possible stress. I believe I was very lucky, because it was very early in my life when I became amazed at the stress levels people carried, and the damage such pressures did to them.

Now that I have a good chunk of my life behind me, I find myself deeply entrenched into step two. In fact, except for people who are literally in a coma, I am about as cranked back as anybody can get.

My surroundings reflect my success, in regards to step two of my plan. My real time world could not be more idyllic for me. Allow me to give you the tour.

First, a little more background about my roots. When I was born, my family resided in a place called Corfu. Corfu is a very small town located on the western end of upstate New York, right between Buffalo and Rochester. The town's population was, and pretty much is, roughly 600 people. I believe being born in a small town is an extremely lucky break. A childhood in a small town is indeed a blessing. To this day, I enjoy reliving the most pleasant of childhood memories.

Those pleasant memories have now brought me full circle. I have discovered to my absolute delight that the characteristics of a small town are pretty much the same, regardless of the time or the location. Here I am today, as I said, after a big chunk of lifetime (most of which I spent drifting around the country), residing in a small, rural, desert community of about 8000 people, a town called Overton, which is located in the southeast corner of Nevada. Both my home towns, then and now, are amazingly similar, considering that about 2,000 miles, a completely different climate, and a span of over 50 years in time separate them.

The place where I now hang my hat miraculously fits my plan for simplicity almost perfectly. My house, by most standards, would be considered quite small, just 280 square feet. As if that wasn't odd enough, its foundation consists of six Michelin radial tires. You see, my home consists of 35 ft. of pure, albeit extremely compact, luxury. I contentedly reside in that most wonderful of modern conveniences, a motor home. Although the technical name is motor home, in reality for me, having owned some form of this type of vehicle throughout my adult life, it has been more often than not, a very necessary escape module.

Owning a motor home is pretty much my one material indulgence, but not for the obvious reason, that of being a nomad. My overwhelming appreciation for the RV lifestyle drifts more towards a much more practical side. Let me explain. All my life I have considered myself a minimalist. It