

TEXAS RAIN

Lynn (Ray) Hobbs

A memoir

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Lynn Ray Hobbs — April 21, 1946 – January 28, 2014.

The manuscript was written between November 1, 1994 and March 1997, and given by the author to Matthew Foutch about 2012. It is published substantially as the author wrote it. The names of private individuals have been changed. Errors of spelling and grammar have been corrected; the author's voice has not been altered.

Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

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A NOTE TO THE READER

Texas Rain is a first-person account of a life that included poverty, addiction, crime, prison and conversion. Lynn wrote it plainly, and he did not soften it.

Before beginning, readers should know that the book contains the author's account of being raped and molested as a small child; of a severe beating in his eleventh year; of a rape he himself committed as a teenager; and of sustained violence against his first wife over a period of years. These passages fall in the first third of the book.

Lynn wrote all of it as confession rather than as boast. He believed that what God had forgiven him was worth telling honestly, and that a testimony which hid the worst of it would be worth nothing to the person who needed to hear it. It is presented here as he wrote it.

A NOTE ON NAMES

The names of private individuals in this book have been changed. Lynn began this himself while writing it — on page 15 of his manuscript he introduces a friend with "we'll just call him Dee" — and that choice has been carried through the rest of the book out of respect for people who did not choose to appear in it.

Two men are named as they were written. Herb Meppelink signed the foreword under his own name and title. Matthew Foutch is named as the editor of this edition.

Public figures are named as the author wrote them. Events, places and dates are unchanged.

FOREWORD

Texas Rain has the potential to be very special to those, who like the author, are bound by negative controlling situations that master one's life. This story of the author's life will also inspire and encourage those who minister to desperate people.

I have known Lynn Hobbs since 1989. It was eight years ago when his mother called and pleaded for her son to enter Mid America Teen Challenge long term resident care program for drug treatment.

Mr. Hobbs came to us as criminally insane. His recovery and victorious living since are a testimony to the miraculous work of the Grace of God and the commitment of Teen Challenge staff to see that change come to pass.

Above all, Mr. Hobbs guides the reader to the true source for an answer to negative controlling situations that master one's life — that answer is Jesus Christ. To receive Christ as Savior and to follow Him as Lord is the key to a new life. The Lordship of Christ in our lives provides the ultimate motivator. True rehabilitation comes by God's awesome power to change men's hearts.

Herb Meppelink

District Director

Teen Challenge of South Texas, Inc.

March 1997

I believe that on this day of November 1st, 1994, the Lord has inspired me to begin to write a biography of my life to possibly inspire others to allow Christ to work in their lives and to assure them that no matter how great their sins are they can be forgiven as mine were on the 28th of February, 1986. I also pray that this will help others to understand a number of problems and incidents that occur in childhood are sure to affect the life, in one way or another, of the mature adult.

I was born April 21, 1946, a twin to a sister. I was raised in poverty by a one-armed mechanic, junk yard dealer. My father, losing his arm at the age of 19, continued his occupation as a mechanic and was able to raise 7 children.

My mother, married at a young age, always seemed to know and trust the Lord. There is no telling how many meals she prayed in or the number of bills that were paid because of her prayers. As a child, I remember many times the bills barely being paid, but there always seemed to be "just enough."

The years before the age of 6 are very vague to me in some ways. I faintly remember during the harvest times in the fruit bearing states, our family going, living in tents and working the harvest for extra money. Mom always seemed to be able to find a church. I do remember that. Many times I remember attending black churches, for many of the harvest workers were of a different nationality and very poor, but we always seemed to be accepted at whatever the church we attended. I remember making a commitment to Jesus and

having a true relationship with Him at a very young age and having the faith to go with it.

There was once, as I recall, when the pastor had taught on Lazarus being raised from the dead and only a week before, my dog Bobby, had been hit by a car and killed. Hearing and believing it was possible to raise the dead, I truly believed I had the faith to do just that. I wandered back to the site where my dog was buried and began to remove the dirt with my hands from off his grave. My faith grew with the removal of each swipe of dirt. The first thing to appear was his tail with not much dirt left covering him. I grabbed hold of his tail and gave a yank, truly believing that with that pull life would re-enter Bobby. To my startled surprise, the only thing that rose was my hand grasping my dog's tail minus the body. Startled, grieved, bewildered, shocked and amazed at what I had done to my dog, needless to say, my faith at that point was crushed, being unable to successfully give my dog life.

I am convinced that I was not the only one startled by my actions. Beyond a shadow of doubt I know that this news was rushed straight to hell and to satan himself — a child, less than 6 years old, having the faith to raise the dead. Satan quickly devised a plan to destroy me that went into action almost immediately.

Within a matter of weeks I was raped and molested by an older cousin. This was the beginning of many of satan's attempts to destroy me throughout my childhood. I feel in many ways that this even destroyed the chance of having a true relationship with my

father. After this incident, I informed my parents of what happened. I was instructed to forget it, not to tell, and even in some ways, from my father's point of view, it was questionable that it even happened. From that point on I could detect a lot of anger and resentment from my father. It seemed as though the harder I tried, the more I failed. I could never do anything right and was told many times that I would never amount to anything.

Shortly after I was raped, an elementary teacher entered my life who only added to my problems. Her way of disciplining the boys in her class was to humiliate them by having them to undress and to redress wearing girl's clothing and sit throughout her class. It angers me, even today, to think that such discipline was condoned by the school system for so many years with no action ever taken. This only kindled the fire of bitterness, hatred, and mistrust of any authority that was beginning to burn deep in my soul. My walk with the Lord seemed to be a distant memory.

At the age of 11 another incident was to occur that would finally be the straw that broke the camel's back. I was severely beaten with boxing gloves in the ring by another kid older and three times my size. I was placed there by a coach with a sick sense of humor. I have never understood why. Maybe because I was large for my age, maybe he had a personal dislike for me, or maybe just because he was having a bad day. The consequences would be something that society would pay for many years to come.

At the moment I crawled out of the ring, I made up my mind that this would never happen again. No man, no woman, nobody would ever have the power to hurt me again without receiving a hundred fold what they dished out. I went home that day, not asking my parents for help nor trying to explain what happened. The only thing I had on my mind was to do what I could, my way — for it seemed that no other way would work. Suspending an old toe sack from a tree limb with a rope, I filled it with old clothes, old car innertubes, and anything else I could find. I then began a self training program of self defense which would rule a long period of my life. Every day, every spare moment I had, me and that toe sack would go at it. I never let it win. I would fight, kick, bite, butt, anything I had to do to win. Many times falling or just hanging on with all my might, being totally exhausted, I never gave up. I was soon more than able to defend myself in any way; with a knife, a gun, my fists, or my feet. It seems as though I had learned to use whatever I had to in order to win. No one would ever hurt me again.

At that time in my life there were only two people that meant anything to me. Mom was always there with her mother's love, and I was to find out over the years that she would never fail me. I guess by now I had become as bitter towards my father as my father was toward me. He never showed any concern for what I achieved, from fighting the Golden Gloves to playing little league. As far as I can remember, my father never saw a fight or never saw me play ball, not one time, although he was a baseball fanatic, an avid Cardinal

fan. Many times he went to see my nephews play baseball, but as I recall my father's shadow never darkened the bleachers to any of my games.

The second person that had any place in my life was my cousin, Roy — not the older cousin of the previous chapter, but a boy my own age — who with the bitterness and mischievous ways he displayed, I'm sure has his own stories to tell of his childhood. We began to experiment with cigarettes, alcohol, and whatever might seem rebellious to anyone during that era. We indulged in it all.

It seems even now, that in any memories of my childhood at all, he always had his place. There was nothing we wouldn't do. I don't believe we were afraid of anything. Some of the incidents were even humorous, though dangerous, as I look back.

I remember once on his 10th birthday when Roy got a dozen throwing darts and a mohawk haircut. It wasn't a big birthday party, I guess I was the only one that showed up. Being daring as we were, while in his room playing, Roy suggested that we have a dart throwing contest. Not at any dart board, but at each other to see who could get the closest without hitting the other. I firmly refused to play the game from fear of hurting him or being hurt by the darts. But after being coached and assured that it was ok, Roy would even let me go first, which made it even better, I finally agreed. I grabbed a fistful of darts and Roy took his position with his back against the wall and arms stretched horizontal to the floor, as we had seen the actors do so many times on T.V. After taking careful aim, I drew

back with my first dart determined to make every dart count. However, my calculations were off slightly. My first dart struck Roy deep in the center of his head, right in the crown. I have never forgotten to this day the expression on his face, the quick upward looking of his eyes, his scream of pain and his verbal expressions of disbelief of what I had done. Quickly throwing the remainder of the darts to the floor, I expressed my unwillingness to continue this game, by making the statement, "I'm not playing anymore!" By this time Roy's mother had quickly appeared in the room expressing her own disbelief at what we were attempting. Needless to say, we were both grounded for a period of time.

At the age of 16, Roy's father had purchased a slightly used 1956 Ford. It was special order, a Thunderbird engine, standard shift overdrive, four barrel Holley carburetor, twin glass-packs, and red and white in color. His father purchased the car on a Friday and was early to church on Sunday morning eager to show off his new automobile. I recall through the early parts of the service how Roy was bragging on how fast it really was and how it would do 60 mph in the first of three gears. I expressed my disbelief, along with some of the other teenagers who were sitting with us near the back row, while carving my initials on the bench in front of me. But Roy was not one to be doubted or disbelieved when he could prove his point. So when the song service was over and we were dismissed to our classes, Roy and I quietly slipped out the side door.

During this era it was not uncommon for people to leave their keys in their car, which Roy's father had carelessly done.

When Roy had asked me to slip out the side door, making the comment that he would prove to me it would do sixty in first gear, I had no idea what was to follow. My expectation was for him to raise the hood, showing me 312 Thunderbird engine with a four barrel carburetor and then kneeling and looking on the twin pipes, but boy, was I wrong!

Roy was determined to do just as he had said he would do to prove to me that it would do sixty mph in first gear. So, taking his place behind the driver's wheel, I on the passenger side, he started the engine and we eased away from the church quietly. But after only a mile or two down the road, Roy stopped, pulled the car into 1st gear, and as the four barrel carb bellowed and the tires began to sling dirt and gravel, he quickly made a believer out of me. It truly would do 60 mph, and did over and over and over again as Roy repeated the process.

It was almost time for our Sunday School class to be over and for us to return for the church service, so we turned and began to make our way back toward the church, Roy driving sensibly for a change. Only one more curve, a short ways ahead, and we would be back. But Roy couldn't resist. He had to show me just one last time what his dad's car would do. He stopped, put the car in first gear and away we went. This time, not being satisfied with what it would do in first, he quickly caught the 2nd gear in the midst of the curve. The

car began to change ends and then began to spin over and over, turning over at least twice. We landed back upright on all four tires with a few modifications in the body style. The car was still red and white, but all the glass had now been removed and the top was lowered with approximately eight inches of vision where a twenty-four inch windshield had once been. Roy calmly looked at me as the dust settled and asked, "Are you all right?" To my amazement I was ok.

Having been assured that we were miraculously uninjured, Roy started the car again and we slowly made our way back to church, Roy being very careful to park the car just like it was before, as if it would matter. We patiently waited outside the side door of the church, sharing a cigarette, waiting for the class bell to ring, then making our way back into the auditorium for the Sunday service.

I was astonished at the unconcern and the peace of Roy's face as we sat through the preacher's message, as though nothing had ever happened. I could hardly wait for the service to be over. The suspense was killing me. Then it came with the congregation standing, as the pastor dismissed the service. Roy and I were among the first to clear the church doors. As we watched from a distance his father came out quickly, surrounded by many of the male congregation, eager to show in detail his new automobile. As he stepped out of the door, looking off into the distance where his car was parked, his steps became slower and slower and his eyes became wider and wider. A look of disbelief rested upon him and

those who were with him. Then taking a deep breath, I can still hear his next word echoing in the nearby woods, "VIRGIL!" I would have liked to have been a fly on the wall and heard him explain that one, but I'm sure he did as only Roy could.

Being of a poor family, at a young age I resorted to stealing, selling, borrowing or whatever I could do to supply my cigarette habit and the use of alcohol which was now quickly increasing in my life.

As I reached the age of dating, Roy and I began seeing less and less of each other. Occasionally we spent a few moments together after a church service or at a youth gathering. Our lives had begun to take separate paths, though we were really headed in the same direction.

I began dating at about the age of sixteen, a Baptist girl who was strong in belief and high in morals. She was able to do what Mother could no longer do, for I had sworn that when I was old enough I would have nothing to do with church again. I could see the hurt in my mother's eyes as Sunday after Sunday I said this time and again. I was not only going to church with this girl, but we began dating on Friday and weekends, seeing more and more of each other and our feelings growing stronger and stronger. We made plans to marry as soon as we became of age and once even ran away on a one-day elopement plan to a neighboring state. We were unable to obtain a marriage license because of a lack of identification.

Disappointed that we were unable to do what we had set in our hearts to do, our Friday and Saturday night back roads parking sessions became more and more intense with the petting, kissing and touching. Finally one night, I'm still not sure what came over me, but I lost total control, quickly overpowering her, taking that which was sacred to her and something that I wanted. In short, she was raped.

I guess it seemed as though the root that was deep inside me was starting to bring forth the fruits of my youth to hurt those that you love. The more you love them, the more you hurt them. To make matters worse, after doing this terrible thing to her, I broke up with her. I did so really without reason or explanation, only saying that I wouldn't have anything to do with her if she wouldn't have sex with me freely. The strange thing was that after a week or two she called and consented that I could have my way if we could get back together again. I refused her offer, really because I didn't want to hurt her anymore. I guess I thought she was too nice a girl for the likes of me.

I began dating other girls but for all the wrong reasons. Sex was without feeling or meaning. I wasn't sure that I could feel anything for anyone anymore. So rather than dealing with my problems, I decided to run. The Army seemed like the most appropriate way to escape. The year was 1965 and they had just declared police action in Vietnam and I was among the first 6,000 infantry troopers to invade Asia.

Now my cigarettes, alcohol, fighting and wild sex rampages were being accompanied with a permit to kill, women for the taking and marijuana now taking its place as another controlling substance and stronghold in my life.

God seemed to be nowhere about as I made my way from month to month, one drug house to another, one woman to another. This seemed to be the greatest war I was fighting, not the Viet Cong, but who and what was worth living for. I didn't really want to die, but I could find no reason to live.

As I look back, I now see that Mother's prayers were very apparent. Many times, looking death eye to eye, it always seemed that the small, still voice was there behind me saying, "Turn left, turn right, do this, don't do that."

There was on such night while walking patrol around a signal communications monitor outside Pu Cue, I believe it was Hill 109. It was about 2:a.m. as I walked the road circling the mountain top. It was only a short walk and we were walking two hour intervals, one man patrol. The site was believed to have been very secure. As I walked, stopping to light a cigarette, I turned facing the valley, for the road that I walked was cut into the side of the hill. Off down the hillside, no more than thirty feet below me, lay two Viet Cong, possibly more, but only the two were visible. But these two were caught by total surprise in the wide open, exposed by the moonlight. They lay there, their machine guns pointed toward me, motionless on the ground, their straw hats covering their shoulders and heads

with only a small portion of their face exposed. I could see them slowly raise their heads and then slowly lowering them again, not sure whether I had seen them or not and not wanting to take the chance of shooting me first and blowing their cover.

My first instinct was to flip off my safety and commence firing, knowing that I had no hope of getting them both before one of them got me. I was about to make my move when that small, still voice behind me said, "Don't do it. Light your cigarette. Lower your gun to your side, slowly, and just stand still for a moment."

I did this, knowing that I had totally exposed myself without any hope of getting either one of them. Now I was easy pickin'. Surprising enough, they didn't make a move. I know I only stood there for a moment, smoking my cigarette pretending to look over the valley, gun lowered by my side, but it seemed like eternity. Then the voice said, "Turn slowly, and continue walking with your gun still down by your side."

I did this thinking I was crazy. Now, not only was my gun not pointed in the right direction, but I was totally blind to what they were doing or what was going on behind me, but I did as I was told. After walking down the road probably forty or fifty feet, now thinking I might have a chance, I turned quickly and fell to the ground overlooking the hillside where they had lain. They were gone. Not a sign of them anywhere. It seemed like only a few moments had passed when automatic gun fire was heard and

parachute flares were shot at the foot of the mountain were two Viet Cong lay dead.

No doubt this was another sleepless night for my Mother as she lay in bed praying. It seems now that I was in the battle, but Mom was fighting the war, interceding day and night, writing me letters encouraging me, sending me pieces of cloth that the church had prayed over, and scriptures from the Bible. All this meant absolutely nothing to me.

The only thing I had to do with the chaplains was trying to convince them that I was crazy so that I could get out of that war and back home to. . . to what I wasn't sure! I was never successful in convincing them, although my actions were more than sufficient for discharge.

Finally it came, February 2, 1966, when I was transferred from Vietnam with a thirty day leave for reassignment to Ft. Hood, Texas, 1st Armored Division.

The flight back to the States in a 747 took only a few hours, but for me and quite a few others on the plane, we soon lost all track of time. Many of us had successfully smuggled whiskey and drugs on board the plane. Flying at such a high altitude, the whiskey soon took its toll. Many of us were higher than a kite by the time the plane landed in San Francisco, California. All of the men, including me, were very excited to be back in the states again.

Even under the influence of the whiskey and drugs, there was a feeling of safety and security just knowing we were back in the land

of the so called free. Many men, including me, fell to the asphalt and actually kissed mother earth a welcome home.

There was a long delay between flights before going back to Little Rock, Arkansas, so I and a friend made our way to downtown San Francisco where we stumbled into a men's clothing store. With our pockets full of money, we bought all kinds of things. I purchased a nice looking suit including a tie and a derby. I was quick to change and to discard the ugly green camouflage that had been a part of my attire for such a long period of time.

My flight was on time departing in the late evening hours. When I arrived in Little Rock early the following morning my mother, father, twin sister and my next to the youngest sister, Nadine, and her husband, Harold, were waiting for me at the airport. When the plane unloaded, I had somehow sobered up considerably. This must have been a work of the Lord for my mother's sake.

Though they were carefully anticipating my arrival, I was able to casually stroll past them and take my place standing quietly behind them. They were looking for a young man in soldier uniform, but I had grown much older and had well hidden my identity in the suit I had purchased. They watched carefully as each one de-boarded the plane until the plane was empty and being taxied away. I stood quietly behind them, hearing them mutter their thoughts of where I might be. "Wonder if he missed his plane?" "Where could he be?" "There is a soldier. Let's ask him. maybe he will know him."

Standing only inches from my sister, Nadine, I asked in a deep tone of voice, "Can I help you Ma'am?"

She turned, making the statement, "No we're just waiting for my brother. He was to have been on this flight." She looked straight at me as she spoke. Just as she turned her eyes back toward the departing plane, she realized it was me. She then turned and screamed, "Here he is!"

They all greeted me and we had a good laugh about how I was able to fool them all. I remember my mother's embrace was firm and long with tearful eyes, and I now know in my heart, it was probably a moment of giving thanks to the One who had kept me through my time there in Vietnam.

My family had come to the airport in separate cars, and as we departed, Nadine and Harold asked me to ride with them and even drive their new car. It was a bright yellow Volkswagen. This was the weirdest car I had ever driven in my life. I was all over the road. The problem was partly because I had not driven for a year, and because this was my first time in a VW. What a trip!

For a few days I stayed close to home, not wandering or drinking too much because of the unannounced welcome home parties and friends dropping by at random.

What a change this was from the life I had lived during the past year with the booze, the women, and the drugs. Now I was drinking iced tea, sitting under a shade tree, and trying to understand the new music. My, how things had changed since I had left. I didn't seem to

fit. I bought a car with the money I had saved while in Vietnam. I tried cruising town, going to all the old hangouts. New faces were everywhere. I hardly recognized any of them. My old running partners had either moved away, married and settled down, were in Vietnam or had been killed in Vietnam.

I was quick to look up my cousin, Roy who had returned from Vietnam approximately six months before I did. Things were different with us, for he was dating, anticipating marriage. Things were just not the same. I couldn't fit anywhere I went, no matter how hard I tried.

Some nights I would just park on the main drag on a vacant lot facing the highway. I would sit on the hood of my car, lean back against my windshield and smoke joint after joint, right in plain view of God, the police, and everybody. At that time in the little town where I was born, marijuana was only a thing talked about on the news, being used by the flower child of California or the forgotten soldiers of Vietnam. I suppose at that time there were no more than five that had even tried it and fewer still who used it on a regular basis, such as I was doing. I guess the signs and the symptoms of the drugs were covered up by the booze that I drank, which was excused by even the local police. I guess they figured we had earned a drink. Regardless of their feeling or their thoughts, they never bothered me then.

I couldn't help but wonder, "What will I do now? What kind of life lays in store for me?" So I quickly devised a plan to marry. My

way of thinking was to find a good Christian girl, one that would treat me right, and marry her. It seemed that was what everyone else had done. So immediately my antennae went up and the scanners went on. In a short matter of a few day I had succeeded in finding her in my local church, with a little coaching from my mother. She was seventeen, a good Christian with high morals and a virgin. I mean a "real" virgin. I was quick to sweep her off her feet in the remaining days of my leave. We dated almost every night. It seemed to be just what I needed. She kept telling me she loved me and I kept telling her I loved her, too. They were words I had used so many times to gain sexual favors from the women out of my past. I suppose she was no more than another woman to soon fall victim to the games I played, to be used and discarded as a worn piece of clothing. Time passed quickly as my thirty day leave came to an end and I returned to the military games that I had become so proficient at.

Standing in the ranks of my new unit, I was probably the most decorated soldier in that company at that time. I wore more medals and ribbons than most of the officers that I had now been made accountable to. I was feared by some and admired by others because of my past history of fighting, drinking, drugging and whoring. The bad attitude that I had previously was now even worse. I had lost total respect for all authority placed over me. I was a true rebel now. My promotion stripes came and went, sometimes even before the paperwork was completed: AWOL, fighting, Article 15, sleeping in

in the morning because of being drunk the night before, leaving on a weekend and taking an extra day — just because.

I was also sleeping with this woman and that woman, the bar flies. Yet, I was still finding the time to call, and still holding firm to the plans of marrying that girl in my hometown church.

The date came that we had set months before to marry. I made my way home, leaving behind a girl that I had been having an affair with during the past number of weeks, sleeping with her only the night before my marriage.

Almost as quickly as I arrived home we were married. Husband and wife. It was as though there were two of me. One of me wanted it to take. The other was not near ready to give up the life of the gigolo I had played for so long.

For a period of a few months, I really tried to change my life and to be a good husband, until I cheated on her for the first time. Strangely enough, I felt dirty, no good and useless, but somehow I was able to turn and put the blame on her. I told her what I had done and made her believe it was her fault because she wasn't being the wife that I needed and wasn't treating me the way I wanted to be treated. To be totally honest, she scored over 100 on both counts. It wasn't her, it was me, but somehow I had convinced even myself that I had the right to do the things I was doing. Cheating became easier and easier as time went on.

I became bad and insanely jealous of her. Interrogating and drilling her about what she had done, who she had talked to and who

she was with during the periods of time we were apart. Sometimes I even beat her. May God forgive me, but I never knew why. I guess in a way it was what I wanted done to me. Night after night, after leaving the base, I would go with my drinking friends and brawl until the early morning. Sometimes I left on Friday night, not telling her where I was and not seeing her until the following Monday morning. I would then come up with some lie, like I had to stay on base and pull extra duty because of some trouble I had gotten into and didn't have an opportunity to call. I know that she knew I was lying, but she wanted to believe me. What a nightmare it must have been, eighteen years old and going through the things that I put her through. I guess she was thinking that things would probably get better when my term in the service was over and we moved back home around her parents and my family. As soon as I was discharged and that is exactly what we did. We relocated to the town where I was born, Malvern, Arkansas. Shortly after getting out of the service Wanda became pregnant with our first child. You would have thought this would have made me settle down and mature, but it only made me worse. No insurance, job hopping from one another, getting kicked out of this place and that because of failure to pay the rent, having cars and T V's repossessed were constant worries. This was not because the money wasn't there, for I was always working somewhere doing something. My working wages had now been reinforced by dealing in drugs to supply my habits. The money went to buy my drugs and alcohol and to pay for my nights on the town,

which had become an every weekend thing. I had now taken the talent God had given me to sing and play my guitar and was using it in some of the nightclubs and bars in the nearby town, Hot Springs.

One of our first big jobs was playing in a bar by the name of Cliff's Bar and Grill, which had the reputation of being one of the roughest and most dangerous places in Hot Springs. Now the women were easier because if you played in the band, you always got first pick of the girls in the bar. I recall sometimes being with as many as two or three in a night and returning home and having sex with my wife in the early morning. This became a regular routine: work five days a week, then the clubs on the weekend.

My wife's pregnancy progressed and shortly she gave birth to our first, a daughter whom we named Brenda. She was born premature, most likely because of the abuse and beatings that my wife was going through at the time. Though it was a seven-month pregnancy, Brenda's lungs were not developed. The nurses had to keep her awake by pricking and thumping her feet, making her cry so her lungs would grow stronger.

I recall drifting off down the hospital halls to a little room with a cross on the door called a prayer room. I wasn't really believing anyone would be listening to me. As far as I was concerned, to my knowledge, my prayers were probably empty words without any faith or belief at all. Miraculously, God strengthened her, and in a matter of days she was home.

I was proud of my baby, but within a matter of days I was right back in the same routine I had always been. For the next fifteen years, only the names of the women, the names of the towns, and the names of the bars changed. The only exception to the routine was the addition of our second child, a son, Ricky, born one and a half years after the birth of Brenda.

I do remember that the abuse of my wife became more severe with each passing year. I recall even coming to the point many times of being inches away from taking her life. One night I even went so far as having a pistol, hammer cocked, barrel deep inside her mouth. It's only by God's grace that she is still alive today, having lived with a mad man such as I was. Why and how she stayed with me, I'll never know. During the years that I was married to her, I know that the affairs numbered most likely over 100. She knowing many of them and catching me in the act with quite a few. In the fifteen years that we were married, there were at least four marriages that I broke up, sometimes having to drive the divorced husband away with a gun.

Even with me being the husband that I was, Wanda was always willing to forgive and to try her best to make the marriage work. She was always very supportive and encouraged me in my music and writing. In 1981, she encouraged me to enter a writing contest in Ft. Smith, AR. Our home at the time was in Greenwood, just outside Ft. Smith, where I was working as an advanced emergency medical technician. The contest was the Barbara Mandrell Kentucky Fried

Chicken Song Writing Contest, and I entered with two songs. The first, Country, won first place in the state and the second, Country gospel, received an honorable mention for second place.

Where I got the words to write a gospel song in the condition and the way that I was living beats me. My songs went from state to the nationals, and to my disappointment, they did not win there.

I relocated to my home in Malvern, after being fired from my job as an EMT-A. While on duty, I was caught by the supervisor in the act of having sex with a female EMT from another district.

After returning to Malvern, Wanda and I separated. Although there had been many, many separations lasting from a week to a month, we always reconciled, not really knowing why. Maybe it was the security of not having to live alone, maybe because of the children. Who knows? This separation was to be different. After moving in with my nephew for a few short weeks, a young and beautiful lady, Darlene, came into my life. Even though she was married, we quickly began an affair and in less than a month she had left her husband, filed for divorce, and she and her daughter had moved in with me. This time, Wanda also started divorce proceedings. Within a matter of a few months I was divorced, Darlene was divorced, and we were quickly married. Darlene had become pregnant during this period of time.

This time I really cared for someone. Maybe it was because she was younger and beautiful. Who knows? But the desire to cheat and to drink and do a lot of drugs had left me. I was now working hard

forty hours a week and coming home and spending my weekends with my wife and my step daughter and loving every minute of it. I was truly trying to do something with my life for a change. My song writing had a new inspiration with each new song being better than the last.

Then it happened! A man with three million dollars came into my life. He heard my music and was willing to do whatever it took to make me the star that I had secretly always dreamed of being. Off to Nashville, Tennessee we went to record my first and what was to be my last country album. We used the very best producers that we could find; money was no object. My producer was J.B. Rawlins, producer of the year, who had just produced "The Devil Went Down to Georgia" by Charlie Daniels and "Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys," by Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings. We had the best musicians that Nashville had to offer. Gene Ward, Alabama's engineer, was my sound engineer. The background singers were straight off the Grand Ole Opry at \$500. per hour. It seemed I was on my way. The music was good, the songs were different, and I had plenty of money behind me.

Many of the record companies were talking about contracts, making plans for Blue Bird buses and making contacts for tours. I was eating, drinking and partying with some of Nashville's most prominent stars and star makers.

After returning home for just a short period of time before going back to Nashville to do the final vocal on my album, **Moonshine**

Whiskey, a strange thing happened. I awoke one morning to find my voice was gone. A weak whisper was all I could get out. My manager was quick to take me to throat specialists and some of the best doctors available. For some strange reason, I had developed a scar tissue on my vocal cords. The doctors said the only hope I had of ever singing or talking again was to surgically have my vocal cords stripped. Even then, they offered little hope that I would ever be able to sing again. My dreams of becoming the overnight star that I was to be vanished with the wind and was followed by my manager who was also the money man. No more talk of contracts, tours and Blue Bird buses.

To add to all of this, Darlene had just given birth to our baby girl, Cheryl, and we had no insurance. I was working, doing the best I could to provide for our needs with the trades that I had developed. One of the better trades I had developed was to become one of the major suppliers of our finances. I had learned the fine art of growing marijuana, Sense A Million, and was in the process of cultivating over one hundred female plants.

I had perfected a highly sophisticated means of irrigation. The plants were receiving a good watering every day, and it was going to be the best harvest I had ever hoped for. Only a short time until harvest when the plants would be fully developed.

One day, while making my way to the patch where the marijuana was planted, I looked up and to my surprise only a few hundred feet above the patch, a helicopter was hovering. For some strange reason,

the helicopter flew off. Fearing that my marijuana crop had been discovered, I quickly harvested the crop only two or three weeks before it was totally mature.

Because our home was close to the patch, I feared my family would be implicated. I quickly gathered my belongings, my wife and children, and left. At this time I was between jobs and did not have enough money to rent another home so we moved in with my parents. We planned to stay with them only a short period of time until I could dry the marijuana and locate buyers.

Near my parent's house was an old abandoned building. It had only one door, a single window in back which faced the woods, and two boards were missing off the bottom on one side. The building, being nearly dilapidated, I thought would make an ideal place for drying the marijuana. I carefully spread out my marijuana buds to dry.

To mark the building so I would know if anyone had entered, I placed a Coke can, partially filled with rocks, against the old wooden door. If anyone entered, the can would be rolled away. Having done this, I left the marijuana in the building, occasionally returning to check on it. I would walk past to see if things had been disturbed, letting the time pass that was needed to properly cure the marijuana. While it was curing, I had been busy successfully locating buyers. All they were waiting on was the delivery.

The day quickly came when the crop was cured and ready to be weighed, packaged, and delivered. It was late evening but still light

as I made my way down to the building again. To my surprise the can filled with rocks that I had placed against the door had been moved. The door had been opened. Someone had located my crop. I didn't dare show any intent of going toward the building. I kept walking down the narrow country road that passed in front of it. As I passed I noticed in the thick underbrush across the road a squad car, cleverly hidden. Without them knowing that I had seen them, I casually walked on past as though on an evening stroll. I suspected they had not taken the crop, but were waiting to catch someone red handed.

With that in mind, I carefully devised a plan to get the marijuana that I had labored so hard for so long. The finances for my future and all my dreams were in that building being carefully guarded. I lay in bed that night rehearsing over and over my plans to rescue that crop. It was around midnight when the plan went into effect.

I made my way, dressed in dark clothing, through the woods behind the old house, carefully and quietly doing a low crawl along the open side of the building where the two boards were missing. I was doing all of this in plain view of the squad car across the road. The only covering I had was the occasional cloud cover between me and the moonlight. Within a matter of seconds I was in the building, unnoticed. Very quietly and precisely I picked up each colon and each bud placing them in four large, hefty garbage bags which I had brought with me.

So far my plan had worked to the letter. I was able to recover it all. All that was left to do was get it out of the building. Now came the hardest and most nerve racking part of my plan. That was to sit quietly until about 2:00 am, when that old train would make its way down those tracks, which would be only about thirty feet from the squad car. That was the longest hour and a half I think I ever had to wait. Finally it came; that old Union Pacific, motors rumbling and horns blowing just like I had hoped it would. The train made more than enough noise to cover up what I was doing on the inside of the building. I opened up that rear window, tossed those four bags of marijuana through it and dove through it myself. I quickly made my way through the woods with my precious cargo in hand.

Only a fool would have attempted something so bold as to try to do all of this under the nose of those policemen. I would have liked to have been a fly on the wall the next morning when they tried to explain where that marijuana went. I don't know, but I bet heads rolled.

Within a matter of a few days I had sixteen thousand dollars in my possession and lots of marijuana still left to sell. Shortly after that a miracle happened. I coughed and my voice returned. My life seemed to be coming back together again. I could talk, I could sing, and I had money in my pocket. The total time that I was without my voice was seven months, and I had basically given up on the hope that I would ever sing again.

With the return of my voice came the return of my dreams to succeed in music. Darlene was quick to agree with me that we should relocate to Nashville, Tennessee and pursue the career in singing and writing music.

With more than enough money for a fresh start, we quickly located an upstairs apartment in Brentwood, Tennessee. We had very little furniture of our own so we purchased almost all new things. I was lucky to find a job working as an electrician supervisor making good money. The drugs in my life were now almost a thing of the past. I was smoking a little marijuana occasionally, but mostly giving my time to my wife, daughter and stepdaughter.

In my spare time I began to renew old acquaintances and make new ones in the music industry. Time and time again it seemed as though I was about to get my lucky break, but doors would shut almost as quickly as they opened. I don't know whether it was because of my failure to succeed in the music industry, the difference in our ages, or if I might have even been justified in my feelings, but I became insanely jealous of Darlene. Maybe I was afraid I was going to lose the only things that meant anything to me anymore, my wife and my children.

Although we had begun to have frequent arguments, it was not like it was before. I never raised my hand to her or threatened her in any way. We had been in Nashville approximately one year when the reality of my nightmares came to pass. She felt we should try a short trial separation with her returning to her mother for a couple of

weeks. Reluctantly, I agreed and took her home to Louisiana. As I left her at her mother's house, I somehow felt that our marriage was quickly coming to an end. I returned to Tennessee and tried to work, my mind was bogged down with my home life. I was barely able to struggle through the first week. Darlene called and said she wouldn't be coming back and that it was all over between us. Somehow, I knew there was another man involved. I had no proof, but was just suspicious. Maybe it was that still small voice guiding me as it had many times before. Unannounced, I made my way back to Louisiana that weekend. I surprised Darlene in the early evening hours as she was preparing to leave for a date. I embraced my daughter, Cheryl, not knowing then that it would be the last time I would ever see her.

I returned to Tennessee that same night mad, confused, bitter and hurt, not knowing what to do. It was obvious that the marriage was over and my dreams had once again been blown away as with the wind. I tried to work Monday, but I was unable to even plan my jobs. I returned to work Tuesday with my mind made up to quit and ask for my severance pay.

I would have my revenge. I knew how much all the beautiful furniture that we had purchased meant to her, so I began the biggest yard sale that Brentwood had ever seen. I sold almost everything and what I couldn't sell, I gave away. She had called and said she would be coming with her brother to pick up the furniture. She would arrive to find an empty house and me gone.

I had heard that the music industry was big and blossoming in Hollywood, California. I purchased a ticket and a big bag of drugs. In a short time I was in a cheap motel on Sixth Street in Los Angeles. This was said to be some of the roughest parts of the town, and I believe it was. While there, from my hotel window, I witnessed a taxi cab driver or a person being mugged as bystanders watched unconcerned.

I was quick to make friends, even in this part of town. I knew how to speak their language and I quickly established myself in a couple of the local bars as I would sit and play my guitar and sing the songs I had written.

Many times I traveled from bar to bar with my guitar thrown over my shoulder and my other hand on the gun in my pocket. There would be eight to ten of the homeless following me for the beers that I would buy round after round. Every evening they would come from the ghettos, searching for a crazy man from Arkansas who sang country music. A number of times as we traveled from bar to bar, I recall the young gangs that lined the street and the sidewalks trying to block our way as we walked. I don't know if they were serious in trying to start trouble or just trying to bluff, looking like they were badder than what they were, but they picked the wrong man and they soon knew it. Many of the other bypassers would stop or walk around them, but I would only hand my guitar to one of the homeless followers and walk through the midst of them. I would have one hand on my gun in my pocket with the other hand free to

throw them out of the way as I came to them. They may have been as mean as I was, I'll never know. They knew the thought of dying wasn't bothering me at all. I was like a crazy man and they knew it.

Within a couple of weeks the city of Los Angeles was willing to buy me a ticket to anywhere in the United States. All I had to do was go. Hurt, lonely, and now homeless, I thought of the only place I had left — Malvern, Arkansas, where my mother and father still resided.

Upon arriving in Malvern many of my old drinking friends and dope smoking buddies were ready to party. In their eyes I was somebody. I had been to Nashville and made records. I talked of stars as leisurely as they talked of their acquaintances. To some of them I had succeeded. To the others I was a curiosity to see how the world had changed me. Although I was in my hometown near many of my family, I stayed with this friend and that friend, constantly moving from house to house, drinking and partying.

Then it happened. I had always sworn that I would never do anything but smoke marijuana, drink my beer, and take a little speed occasionally. I was with a good friend of mine, we'll just call him Dee. He had been a junkie for many years and one of the most well known drug suppliers in our part of the country. He pulled out his needle and spoon, and as he cooked up his fix, he asked, "Would you like to try some?"

Before I knew it, the words, "Yeah, why not?" had come out of my mouth. In seconds I felt the needle pierce my veins and felt the warm rush as the drugs found their way through my body for the

first time. That first time was enough. I was hooked. Within a matter of a couple of months I was running my own drug houses, had ten to twelve people selling for me, and was doing \$1200 to \$1800 a week myself. I had bought a motorcycle and the clean, well groomed, country singer was a thing of the past. I now had hair to the middle of my back, a full beard, and I seldom went anywhere without a gun in my boot, a buck knife open in my back pocket, and another pistol hidden between the seats of my motorcycle.

I couldn't count the fights and the trouble that I had. I do remember one night when a friend of mine, Wade, had had some trouble at a bar and asked me and Red to help. As Red and I held off the bar, Wade was quick to settle the score with the guy that he had had trouble with. After only three or four blows from Wade the guy was out cold. Then Wade took off his belt buckle, which was special made with a three inch blade that was concealed in his belt. He then scalped the man. Covered with blood, Wade jumped into the car, Red, and I made our getaway on the back roads.

The drug dealing became more and more profuse as I had quickly gained the reputation of always being able to supply, no matter what the need or quantity. My reputation was not only rapidly growing on the streets, but I was becoming one of the most wanted by the undercover drug enforcement agencies.

I realize now looking back that some of it was paranoia but some of it wasn't. There was so much going on in my life at that time that it was hard to tell which was which. Many a time on my drug route

as I would take the back roads through the winding, country roads between midnight and 2:00 am, it was almost as though I could hear a voice saying, "You're being followed. Go around the next curve. Quickly turn your lights off on the motorcycle and lay down in the high grass alongside the road until they pass."

I would do as the voice commanded and to my surprise there would be two or three cars go by at a high rate of speed without lights. I would get up, take a new route, and get away laughing at how I had eluded the law once again. It got to a point to where I knew many of the undercover agents that were assigned to me. I remember one night when I was high with one of the undercover agents as he confronted me to turn the table and become one of them. I entertained the thought only for a moment, knowing the consequences of being discovered as a narc in the drug world that I had become so deeply involved in. I had men at my disposal that would quickly respond on my command to bust someone kneecaps with a ball bat so that they would never walk again or to take their life. It was a cruel world and the weak could not survive. The acquaintances that I had made were much like animals in a way. As the animals destroy the weak and the sick in their habitat, the same stands true in the drug world.

Slowly but surely the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) began to invade my drug houses and my territory. I recall once that I had discovered an undercover agent that visited one of my houses on a regular basis making small buys and always trying to arrange a big

deal. I could have done so easily, but I had a bad feeling about him so I kept holding off. Finally one night my fears of him being an agent were confirmed about 2:00 in the morning from another dealer. Though I had men that I could depend on to take care of him, this was something I wanted to do myself. So I pulled my motorcycle next to the steps of my house. I sat on the steps behind the bike, facing the street with a sawed off shotgun loaded with buckshot. I waited for morning to come which I knew would bring him for his daily buy between 8:00 and 8:30 am. The night seemed to last forever as I planned each move, step by step, killing him 1000 times during those hours. Finally it came. The baby blue colored van pulled up as it had many times before and he bounced out smiling, making some sort of jolly remark that I don't recall even hearing. I waited until he was approximately eight to ten feet from me, close enough that I could see deep into his eyes. Then I stood up, shotgun in hand, hammer cocked. Death was so thick in the air you could feel it. Though I tried a number of times, I was not able to pull the trigger. It was as though it was welded. As we stood looking in each other's eyes he was sure his number was up. The things going on in my mind, I couldn't understand. I was unable to physically pull the trigger. It was as though God had His hand on it. Then came that small voice again. "Don't do it. Throw down the gun and walk away. Don't look back."

It was that same voice that I had heard in Vietnam. The voice that I was beginning to know better than my own. I had no choice. It was

as though a power greater than myself took control of my body. It threw down the sawed off shotgun, turned me and forced me to walk away. I could hear the agent wrestling with his pistol behind me, heard the hammer cocking, and heard him laughing wanting me to turn so the bullet would enter from the front. I knew all this because the voice kept telling me, "Don't look back. He won't shoot you in the back. Trust me. Just keep walking."

I don't know what happened after that. It was as though my mind went blank. I just remember walking hours upon hours, not knowing what to do anymore.

I knew I could never go back. I knew I would have to relocate. Unable to deal with these conditions any longer, I bought an old car and headed out for Florida. I had heard that you could make \$100 a day picking fruit and that drugs were readily available of any kind in any quantity. I was soon to find out that most of what I had heard was a lot of talk, but it was a good place to hang out and cool off until some of the heat passed. And it was good for me in a way. I no longer lived and slept in the double wide beds with the sunken bathtubs with the ladies of the evening that I frequently entertained. I had now been reduced to living in a burnt out house trailer that had been abandoned. I, a black Cuban, and a Mexican were able to restore it to the point of keeping out the night air and the misquotes. Life was a nightmare. Not only was I forced to come off of drugs because of the lack of money, but now I had to resort to picking and carrying beans with the Haitians working the fields wherever the

harvest was, realizing I was there making only enough to eat or do a shot. If I ate, I had no drugs. If I did drugs, I did not eat. It was as though the Lord left the choice up to me. But gradually the Lord restored my strength due to the lack of drugs and eating a good meal after a hard day's work.

My relationship with the black Cuban grew day by day. We became the best of friends for almost a year, living homeless in the Everglades, sharing our meals and our vision of someday having a better life. I quickly became a perfectionist at living homeless on the streets. I had never known what it was like to sleep under a bridge in a winter rain or to heat my coffee up in a wine bottle or to have to sharpen my drug needles on a matchbox.

Life for a year became routine. I survived from day to day. Then I began to feel the drawing to make another big drug deal. Just one last time to have the new clothes, the motorcycle and the things that come with that style of life.

I devised a plan. I sold my car and made my way to Mexico, befriended by a trucker along the way. He was a drug user also and I had a large sum of crystal meth that I had purchased just before leaving Florida. I shared my drugs with him and helped him drive. Within a matter of hours we were in Laredo, Mexico with him knowing my plans to make a large drug buy while I was there and knowing about the quantity of drugs I had in my procession at the time. He began to make plans of his own.

What gave him away I guess, was the Holy Spirit who aroused me in the middle of the night in the sleeper of the truck. The cab was locked and the keys were left in the truck while the driver went into a bar and I stayed behind resting.

As the Holy Spirit aroused me, I awoke to see the driver with many companions (seven of them altogether) in the rearview mirror of the truck. I overheard them as they secretly plotted to rob me of the drugs and money, kill me and leave me in this Mexican town. Seeing the reflection of the knife in his hands, I knew this was very real. A battle that I would have to win to survive.

Two of the men approached with the driver on one side while the other four took their place on the other side of the cab of the truck. As the driver mounted the steps to enter the cab, one of the smaller of the bunch entered the tool compartment directly below the sleeper where I was located. The driver became very angry when I would not open the door and allow him to enter. I informed him that I knew of their plans. As we talked I felt the plywood beneath the mattress in the sleeper begin to rise. This was the only thing between me and the man that had entered the tool compartment below me. I allowed it to rise to a point that I knew that his hands would be in a critical position. Hanging from the top of the sleeper, kicking with all my might with both feet simultaneously, I knew from the groan below me that I had succeeded in disabling the predator below me.

As I watched, the four on the other side assisted him in leaving the tool compartment. I began to blow the horn of the diesel,

knowing by doing so I could be putting myself in jeopardy with the law enforcement of that area, but I had to draw attention some way to cease the attempt to take my life. I knew it was successful as I saw the seven walked away, heads looking out of the truck stop cafe. I sighed with relief as they made their way back into the bar joining the truck stop, laughing and kidding, trying to avoid arousing any further suspicion.

Quickly I grabbed my bags, my drugs, and left out the blind side of the truck so I would not be easily seen from the truck stop. I made my way through the shadows of the parking lot. To my surprise as I was leaving the parking lot, just before I reached the highway, a diesel rig sat idling silent. As I passed by the truck, the door flung open and a voice said, "Do you need a ride?"

Not asking where he was going, I quickly made my way into the cab. In a matter of moments we were on the interstate, leaving behind the nightmare of Laredo, Mexico. Little did I know I was only entering a nightmare of another kind.

As we rode, the overly friendly driver would never stop talking about drugs and how he was tired and wished he had something to help stay awake to make the long trip ahead. He was constantly asking if I knew where he could get some. Being street wise from my previous life of dealing drugs, I immediately sensed that this was no ordinary truck driver. We were empty leaving Mexico and I could tell by the way he handled the rig that he was not a seasoned driver of the road as he claimed to be. So I began to search the truck

diligently with my eyes and not to my surprise, as I scanned the sleeper of his rig, mounted on the ceiling was a video camera. I had no doubts that I had been under surveillance in the border town of Laredo, trying to sell the drugs to total strangers. Someone had obviously tipped them off that I was dealing. Had he known my true identity the video would not have been necessary. We talked well into the night. From time to time I brought up my need to go to the restroom, but the thing I was really wanting was for him to stop that rig so I could disappear into the shadows, giving him the slip as I had many others before him.

Finally he did stop. As he used the phone I quickly made my escape, carelessly leaving behind my jacket. We were somewhere in Texas and it was winter and cold. I hid in the shadows watching him as he searched and paced, looking for me. He then returned to the phone when he was sure that I had given him the slip. He made his way to the rig and shortly after I made my way to the highway, my thumb out, walking and scanning the horizon for my next possible ride.

Morning came and with it a number of short rides with people as they made their way to work. I recall that one of drivers, as he dropped me off, said he wanted to bless me and gave me six dollars. I thought it strange that someone would give money to a perfect stranger for no reason. I received it gladly since I had drugs but was short on cash. I was still carrying a large quantity of drugs in my bag and a box of needles. As the day passed, so did many cars as I

struggled to make my way back to Arkansas. Night was beginning to fall again and with it came a cold Texas rain. There I was, on that lonesome highway, a Harley tee shirt, a pair of Levis, cowboy boots and a small handbag. Everything in the world that I owned I held in one hand.

The rain began to fall harder. It seemed as though no one would have pity and give me a lift. The cars were few and far between when that small still voice went to work doing what He does so well, convicting us of sin. I began to weigh my life in the balances. Forty years old. Lost my wife and kids, lost my car, lost my job, lost my integrity, but most of all lost my desire to live. Who could I turn to? Who could help me? The VA hospital had told me to not come back. I couldn't return home, not with the drug habit I had. I couldn't do that to my parents. I couldn't quit on my own because I had tried so many times before and found myself only substituting one drug for another. Maybe I would end my life. Maybe I would throw myself in front of the next car or truck that came by. Maybe I would freeze to death in the Texas winter rain. I didn't know what to do or where to go. It seemed as though I had reached the crossroads of my life. To change or to die. I had never been a quitter before and somehow I knew I couldn't quit this time.

I knew what I had to do. I stopped, took the box of needles out of my bag and began to crush the points of them in the asphalt. I never stopped until the last needle was bent, but then there was the drugs. What would I do with them? Hundreds of dollars worth!

I began to walk slowly down the highway again and I began to wonder... could God forgive me? Could He change my life as I had heard of Him doing for many others? He had changed Roy's life. Other friends began to pass before my mind that had become Christians and now had a life worth living. They had respect and dignity again. I kept thinking, God could never forgive me, not for the things I had done. Then I thought, "What have I got to lose? Nothing, and everything to gain!"

"God, I don't know if you're hearing me or not. I know that the way that I've been living is wrong, but I can't help myself. I can't say that I love you because I don't know you, but I want to. I can't say that I don't enjoy doing the drugs, but I want to quit."

Then the words, "Please forgive me," came out and with them forty years of hurt and tears began to roll down my cheeks. I was crying... something I hadn't done since I was a child. In the world I had been living in you didn't dare show emotion or tears because that showed weakness. But I was crying and it felt good!

Somehow, somehow, I knew I was different. I knew that God had forgiven me of everything. I reached into the bag, taking some drugs as I walked and threw them down, taking my cowboy boots and grinding them into the rain soaked asphalt. Each time I reached in and came out with a handful of that crystal meth it was as though my burden became lighter and lighter. I was laughing and crying, making a game of destroying those drugs. I made sure that each bag

I threw down was totally destroyed and melted in that winter rain. I wanted to be sure that no one would ever find them or use them.

Finally, they were all gone and so were my problems. I know that doesn't make sense. I'm still on the run, it's still cold and rainy and now not only do I have but a small amount of cash, I have no drugs to sell to turn money.

That was the least of my worries as I walked down that highway praising my God and my new found friend. All at once there were some lights slowing down and pulling up behind me. It was a ride okay, but not one that I really wanted. As the policeman leaned from his car, floodlight in hand, he demanded to see identification which I didn't have. He harassed me a few minutes and then told me to leave. "Get off the highway and don't be hitchhiking!"

With a "Yes, Sir, thank you," I moved off the highway, twenty to thirty feet off the asphalt. Now I'm thinking, "How will I ever get a ride now? I couldn't get a ride when I was on the highway with my thumb out. What are the chances now when the lights of the cars won't even shine on me?"

It seemed as though I had only walked a few moments. I didn't care what happened to me anymore. I knew I was right with God. I continued to walk well off the side of the highway.

Then to my surprise, a horn blew behind me. The passenger door flung open and a voice came from the vehicle, "Need a ride?"

I could hardly believe my ears. I quickly made my way toward the open door. As I entered the car my eyes fell on the driver. He had

longer hair than mine and was well dressed. The thought quickly passed through my mind, "this guy is probably gay," but I was in no position to be picky. After I closed the door, he asked "Where are you going?", and there was a peace about his voice. I looked at him and explained that I was on my way back to Arkansas. Then I looked at him again. There was something strange about him. His hair was long and beautiful. It lay like a feather, not a hair out of place. His eyes shone like two glowing red coals and I could not ever really see his face but I could see his face.

As we talked, I shared my salvation experience with him. He encouraged me, looking at me occasionally smiling and rejoicing from time to time. I really felt strange. Was this an angel? Was it Jesus Christ, Himself? He was not human, whoever he was, but a spirit.

We shared with each other for over an hour, talking about music, Mama and home, and what I was going to do with my life now. The whole time I was with him, I thought it strange that we never met a car or saw another person. It was as though he and I were the only ones in the world. I shared my love for music and he said he would have some songs that he would send to my mother's house and yet he never asked for her address. When I asked him if he played, he replied, "Yes." I inquired "With who?" He replied, "You might say I'm with the Heavy Led." Then his laughter filled the automobile.

All at once I looked up and we were sitting in a large parking lot outside some sort of truck stop. He looked at me and said, "This is

as far as I go." He encouraged me to believe that it would be all right now. I was quick to invite him in to the cafe, wanting to get a better look at him in the light. He replied, "I'm sorry, but I can't go any further."

He touched my hand, gently squeezing it, assuring me that I would be able to get a ride from here. The skin of his hand was as soft as a baby's cheek. I stepped out of the automobile, shut the door and took about ten steps. I turned to wave "good-bye", only to find that he and the automobile had totally disappeared. It was as though they never were. I can totally relate to what Peter(?) said after Christ's crucifixion and resurrection when they were walking on the road to Emmaus. As Jesus walked and visited with them, they thought he was a stranger and invited Him to join them because it was late. As Jesus blessed the food, they knew it was Him. As Jesus disappeared, Peter made the statement, "Did not our hearts burn within us as he spoke?" (Luke 24:32)

I may never know in this life who or what it was, but be that as it may, I know that it was of the Lord!

After a few cups of coffee I felt the need to get back on the road again. Being drawn by some other force, I again took my place along the side of the highway. In a matter of moments I caught another trucker. A real, honest-to-goodness trucker, with nothing on his mind but seeing those little white lines pass us by. I rode most of the day with him. We did very little talking. I think he could see the weariness in me and allowed me to sleep the biggest part of the way.

This was the first time I had shut my eyes in days, and I slept in perfect peace... something I had not experienced in a long time.

After a few hundred miles we came to a fork in the highway where he went his way and I went mine. The rain had ceased and I had never seen so many stars. I made my way to an all night convenience store. It wasn't in a town. It was just out in the wide open spaces of Texas all by itself. I went in the bathroom from time to time quizzing God and asking Him what to do. Should I hitchhike? Should I walk? What should I do? Walking back out of the restroom I stood looking out the big plate glass window in the front of the store, drinking the coffee the store manager was so generously giving. I stood waiting on God to say or do something. There was a couple of video game machines beside where I had been standing off and on for over two hours. I remember saying, "God, if you want me to go back out into the cold night air, just say so and I'll go."

At that very instant the game machine that I was standing by, which had been silent throughout the evening, lit up and "On your mark, get set. . .Go!"

I couldn't believe my ears. Again and again it said it. "On your mark, get set. . . Go! On your mark, get set. . .Go!"

This had to be God. He used a donkey once, I guess He could use a machine if He wanted to and He did. Moments later I was walking out that door, cup of coffee in hand awaiting my next ride.

I walked approximately fifty yards down the highway away from the convenience store and sat on a bridge railing. I was visiting and talking with God for the traffic was real light if any at all. After about thirty minutes I heard a small still voice say, "There's your ride."

I looked up and there to my surprise, parked in front of the convenience store, was an eighteen wheeler. How he was able to come up and park without me hearing him I'll never know. I saw the driver coming out of the store heading toward his truck and I started towards the truck. The driver had a shorter distance to travel than I did and he took his place behind the wheel and the big rig began to move out into the highway toward me. God had told me this was my ride and I believed it was, so I stepped out into the middle of the highway in front of the rig. He came to a sliding halt almost hitting me. I was able to reach out and touch the front of the rig by the time he got it stopped. I walked to the passenger side of the rig, opened the door and took the seat, not saying a word.

The driver began to scream, "What do you think you're doing? Get out of my rig."

I looked him straight in the eye and told him that if I got out he was going to have to put me out because God told me this was my ride to Dallas. He smiled and asked me if I was a Christian. I replied "Yes."

Dropping the rig into gear he said, "I am too and I'm going as far as Dallas."

We shared our faith through the night pausing only occasionally to catnap, trying my best not to be rude and ignore his company. Sitting in silence I recalled the words of my mother, "Son if you're ever out on the road and need help, find you a church. They'll help you."

As the driver reached his destination, I asked him if there was a church that he might recommend. He said there was a big church right on my way home, just outside of Dallas in a place called Rockwall, Texas, Larry Lea's Church on The Rock. I thanked him and we parted ways.

From one ride to another it seemed as though God had put wings under my feet. As soon as I left one ride, another was waiting until I found myself standing in front of a large beautiful church with gold windows reflecting in the sun light. There was a man caring for the lawn and he directed me toward the office. I walked up to the man sitting behind the desk and he asked if he could help me. I told him I wasn't sure but I was homeless and needed a place to stay. I shared my salvation experience and he greeted me with a brotherly hug and said, "Yes, I believe we can help, but first is there anyone you would like to call?"

"Yes, Mom," I replied and gave him the number which he dialed for me. The answer on the other end was a weak, breathless, "Hello." It was Mom, sick again.

"Hello, Mom. This is me and I've got some good news for you. I got saved and I'm in church." There was a silence and a grateful

sobbing on the other end. As she asked where I was, her voice was so weak I could hardly understand her.

I told her, "Mom, I'll be coming home soon." Her reply was "No, you stay and grow. They'll help you." We prayed together and I'm sure that was a long awaited moment for her. I told her that I'd be calling and letting her know how things were going.

As I hung up the phone, the man behind the desk was joined by another gentleman. "Marvin," he said, "this is Lynn Hobbs and he needs a place to stay. Can you help?"

"Yes," he replied. "We have an extra bedroom in our homeless house." The man informed him that I needed work also. He said he believed he could help there too. His father had a battery reprocessing plant and could use some help. In a matter of moments we were loading up heading toward the house that would be my home for the next few months. He gave me a Bible and led me to a clothing room where I was issued some decent clean clothes. He then took me to a bedroom and informed me that he would be by early the following morning to pick me up for work at his father's.

I put my clothes away, sat down on the bed, and opened the new NIV that Marvin had given me. This was neat. I really enjoyed reading the Bible. I had tried to read it many times before but the words seemed empty. Now they seemed so full of life and alive. I could hardly put it down, but I was forced to when the other people who lived in the house began coming in. There were two couples each having two children real young in age, probably five and

below, and another bachelor much younger than myself. I introduced myself and shared my love for the Lord. Though these were supposed to be Christians, somehow I could sense that they didn't have the deep love and respect for Jesus that I had. I guess Paul said it best when he said, "Those who have been forgiven much, rejoice much!"

The night quickly passed and before I knew it morning had come and Marvin was there to pick me up. I was excited about meeting his father, having a real job, and making honest money. We arrived at his business which was located behind his house on the other side of town. He walked me through his battery reprocessing plant which was a small two to three man operation.

I learned quickly and within a day or two I was running the job. I had turned into a regular "Jesus Freak." Every spare moment I had, I had that Bible open and reading. When the other workers came in I was quick to witness to them what God had done for me and how he loved them too. Needless to say, they only came around when they had to.

The house where I was staying was only a house. They only provided a place to stay — a roof over your head — no food. It was left up to us to provide that for ourselves. There were only two keys to the house. I was given one and one of the married men, Curtis, was given the other. Food was scarce in the house and often we would all go to bed hungry.

After a few days on the job my boss advanced me \$20. To him this wasn't much, but to me it was everything. Lunch time came and I walked off down the road to a small hamburger joint to buy myself a hamburger, fries and a milkshake. This was the first hot food I had had in days.

With the money I had left I set my mind to buy some bread, milk and sandwich meat to take to the home. It would be enough for everyone to have something to eat and the kids would have some milk. Those were my plans, not God's.

As I walked away from the ice cream bar, I noticed a man and I assumed his wife and child with him at the pay phone. As I passed by and had only gone up the road a short ways, God spoke to me and said, "Go back and give him every cent you've got. Trust me." I just knew this couldn't be God because what I had intended to do with the money was right in my eyes. Then the same words came to my heart again, "Go back, give him all you've got and trust me."

It didn't make sense, but I had heard this voice too many times not to know to obey. So I turned and walked back to the man standing by the phone. He watched me approach him with curious eyes as I reached and took my wallet from my pocket, then carefully took out every bill in his presence. As I handed it out to him I said, "Here, God told me to do this."

Tears welled up in his eyes as he said, "Who?" I replied "God told me to give you this," and turned and walked away feeling twenty feet tall. I knew that God had used me to hand deliver a

message to someone who needed Him as much as I had. It was only a seed but I know God watered it and it has surely been harvested by this time.

I still wondered what would be for supper in that big crowded house tonight. When I arrived at the house that evening, Curtis, who had the other key, arrived only a moment later. I had just unlocked the house and Curtis and I entered together. I went straight to my room and Curtis went to his, having to pass through the kitchen to get there. I heard a loud "Wow! Where did you get this food?"

I couldn't believe what I was hearing as I walked from my room into the kitchen. In amazement we both stood silent for a moment, standing looking at the large round table with food stacked so high that the table could not contain it. It had spilled over the edge of the table and stood piled like gold approximately one foot high on the floor. Everything you could imagine from donuts to T bone steaks — from chocolate milk to orange juice — from cornbread to peanut butter. It was all there... gallons of it, pounds of it!

Again he asked me, "Where did you get all of this?", knowing I had the only other key. I told him I didn't, that God did. Then I shared with him my experience at the ice cream bar. Moments later Marvin from the church arrived as we were putting it away in the icebox. His words were the same as Curtis's. "Wow. Where did you get all of this?"

Curtis looked at him in amazement, not believing that the church had nothing to do with it. Marvin assured us that he knew nothing

about it. Others were asked from the church. No one knew where all this came from. They were all reluctant to believe that God had done it... even the old time Christians. But I knew! The words, "Trust Me," rang in my ears with a chuckled little laughter following those words.

Life became pretty routine. Work, church, and some street ministries I had become involved in. I actually looked forward to church and I still could not get enough of the Word, sitting and reading my Bible hours at a time when time allowed. I was doing just as Mother had said... growing. This continued for approximately six months. I called Mother every week. Her health would come and go but she was always excited to see that I was still with the Lord.

As a bird knows to migrate from the North to the South, so a burning desire developed in my heart to return home. I slowly began to pack and gather things together for my trip. One of my most prized possessions was a brass, fish shaped Jesus belt buckle which one of the men in the church had loaned me. I conveniently kept forgetting to return it though I was confronted by the Holy Spirit many times. I had fully intended to keep that belt buckle regardless of the cost.

Before I became a Christian my heroes were Willie and Waylon and I wore belt buckles reflecting the image of those people. Now I had a new hero and the belt buckle had become a symbol of my faith, not only to Him but to others. After many days of conviction from the Holy Ghost, I returned it with a sarcastic remark of "Here's

your belt buckle." He reached to take it but then withdrew his hand and said, "Aw, just keep it." I replied "Thank you, I will," and walked away with my new belt buckle. I knew it meant more to me that it would even mean to him. I knew too that God had him give it to me.

With each passing day the desire to return to Arkansas (home) became stronger. I had been in close contact with my mother by phone and she had made all the arrangements for me to enter the David Wilkerson Teen Challenge program, a program he had set up in the late 60's to help people with controlling problems such as I had. The program had worked for many others. Maybe it would work for me. I was no longer addicted to drugs. God had miraculously delivered me from using \$1200–\$1800 a week, and I had no more desire to drink. I was still bound by cigarettes and satan was oppressing my mind in such a strong way that only if you had been in my shoes could you understand. Being so addicted to drugs had somehow opened the door to the spirit world. I could hear demon beings and occasionally felt their hands on my body, touching me, choking me or hitting me. I needed help and I knew that the kind of help I needed could only come through Christ.

I had purchased a ticket from Dallas to Little Rock with money I had saved while working at the battery shop, and I was ready to go. The day before my departure satan came against me in full force. I came in late that afternoon and around 5:00 satan came at me again. Only this time it was as though he had totally taken control of my

mind. I went into the back yard to be alone and to try to deal with this. Boy, was that a mistake!

I had become so dependent upon that small still voice, the Holy Spirit, guiding me and advising me because I no longer wanted to depend on my own judgment for anything. I don't remember exactly what happened or how it happened, but satan came at me as an Angel of Light somehow convincing me that I could fly. I recall running around the back yard much as a wild man somehow really believing I could really fly, and I did at one point.

As I jumped and hurled myself into the air my leap was accompanied with a demonic force that somehow threw me. I found myself hanging on the top of a six foot high chain link fence. The fence had been put in upside down with the twisted wire towards the top for security purposes. It's a miracle that the sharp jagged end of the wires didn't take my life or do serious damage, but somehow all I received were some superficial scratches.

The shock of being hurled through the air and landing on that fence brought me back to reality. I jumped off the fence and began running across the yard this time trying to escape the force that was obviously trying to take my life. The commotion taking place had now aroused the others living in the house. Curtis ran and tried to grab me, but was unable to hold me, breaking his leg in the process.

My sanity returned almost as quickly as it had left and I quickly returned to comfort Curtis and thank him for trying to help. I spent

all that night and most of the next day praying my way back home where I truly felt that help awaited.

With the rising of the early morning sun I found myself eagerly awaiting my ride to the airport. Marvin was to be there early and he was right on time. He took me to the airport and prayed for me in parting as he made his way toward his job, and I made my way to that big silver eagle which I thought would end all my problems. I was soon to find out that they were just beginning.

The flight was on time and the flying conditions were good. I passed the time of day and shared my faith with a young lady who was sitting in the seat next to me. It seemed like the conversation had only began when they announced our arrival in Little Rock. It was as though I had flew straight into the hands of my enemies and the nightmare of my past came rushing back.

I don't know how they knew I was coming and at the time I didn't know for what reason they picked me up. In only a matter of moments after arriving at the Little Rock airport I was being handcuffed and forced into the back seat of a patrol car. I didn't know why they picked me up, but I later found out it was for loitering, they said. If I had known this it would have saved me a lot of jail time and misery. As far as I knew, they had picked me up on old drug charges and I was facing the greatest fear of my life — prison. I had always sworn they would never take me alive. Now here I was and there was nothing I could do about it.

When they threw me in the cell I became raving mad. I soaked my clothing and towels in the commode and slapped the policemen in the face with them or slung it on them as they passed by my cell. A number of them entered the cell and disrobed me and then moved me to a more solitary cell. I was naked in that cell for weeks, only occasionally seeing the hand of the person sliding my tray into the cell. That time was terrible but it did give me time to cool off. I'm not sure how long I was in there. I lost count of the days.

Eventually they moved me to a holding cell with six or seven other men. I continued to witness although I wasn't sure why God had allowed this to happen to me. I only knew as Peter said, "Who else can we turn to? Only He has the words of eternal life."

Days passed with no hope of ever getting out, so I devised a plan of escape. I studied the guards, doing my best to know the location of each one in a given situation. Then came the time to act and that's just what I did. I pretended to be sick, gagging myself with my finger when the guard's back was turned. He turned to find me, from all appearance, very ill and choking. Quickly he made his way to the cell and opened the door. The moment that key turned I was on my feet running through that door, throwing only one blow, coming up with all my force and strength in the xiphoid process, most likely rupturing his spleen. I pushed him to one side and ran as fast as I could down the hall. About seventy five feet from the cell where I had been was two double doors and a desk to the right. Just through those doors was freedom.

Only one other guard stood between me and those doors. He turned to see a madman running straight at him. I never slowed down as I threw a hard right to his jaw and throat. In the process of hitting him I tripped, only a few feet from the door. Now there were seven men standing between me and the door. I might have gotten through one or two or two of them, but seven was too many. I was quickly thrown to the ground, spread eagle on the floor, one man on each arm one man on each foot, and one man astraddle of my back with my long hair gripped in his hand. He began to try to smash my brains out on that concrete floor. I felt my forehead cave in and for an instant felt my spirit leaving my body, but it was as though God said, "Not yet."

As my spirit reentered my body, I felt my head take form again. I don't know what that cop who was mashing my brains out saw, but he jumped off of me with a fear in his eyes as he ran back to his desk.

Now I was in big trouble. They took me to the hospital to have me cleaned up. Somehow God's hand was on me. There was only a small scratch now on the side of my head that I knew just a short time before was battered in. I found out later that the two cops that I had assaulted in the process of trying to escape were not so fortunate. One spent six months and the other seven months in the intensive care unit.

As for me, back into the hole I went. But only after the changing shifts at the police station had made two ranks with their nightsticks.

They handcuffed me and walked me through them. Each one took a blow as I went by. I suppose they were repaying me for what I had done to their friends. I, no doubt, deserved everything I got and more.

It was a long eight months in that cell with at least four broken ribs, and I was passing blood through my urine and bowels. God's grace was more than sufficient during that time as He healed me without any medical treatment. During those long months without any calls home I'm sure Mom thought I was back on drugs or dead. But finally they moved me to a cell with other men and a phone. I called home to see if Mom would help me make bail, but Dad would not hear of it. As far as he was concerned I was dead. Finally I called one of my old drug suppliers and put some pressure on him to get me out. It worked. The next day he was there to pick me up. On the way home he pulled off the side of the road and did a shot of heroin. I really wanted a shot but there was only enough for him.

He took me home. Mom was glad to see me, but Dad kept his distance. Mom had called her pastor and he pulled some strings and got me in Teen Challenge in Hot Springs. I wasn't really wanting to go, but I had no choice. Dad said I couldn't stay there. The pastor was there bright and early the next morning to take me. On our way I told him I didn't really need this program. He turned and said "Lynn, you've been doing things your way for 40 years. Why don't you let someone else make decisions for you for a while?" That made sense!

The next thing I knew I was in someone's office going through a strip search. They went through everything I owned looking for drugs, cigarettes or whatever. It was much like volunteering to go back to jail with no bars. After the search, Mom's pastor left and I was left with a little twisted man in a wheelchair who was telling me what I would and would not do, where I could and could not go, what I could and could not say and what I would and would not eat. Deep inside I was wondering how much I could take before this guy would come up missing and I would come up gone. He showed me my room and gave me a schedule, and what a schedule it was.

This program started earlier than I used to get in and was full all day with three church services a day and Bible teaching and studies throughout the day. I remember kneeling by my bed that day and asking God for the grace to do this if that was what He wanted me to do.

The first day or two I was nervous and had a hard time with the studies. I had to learn to read and write again because of the prolonged drug abuse. My desire to give the program a chance increased as I started to make friends who helped me to feel more comfortable. The church services began to be a special time for me and God. I was filled with the Holy Ghost the first week and each day that went by I was learning to trust in God more and more. The counselors didn't act like I was crazy. They had dealt with these devils before and began to show me how to do it for myself. I was

learning how to take charge of those devils that tormented me day and night.

The days turned into weeks and weeks became months. I had been there almost four months and it was almost time to go to Cape Girardeau, Missouri, for the last ten months. Everything seemed to be going my way and then it happened! The director called for me to come to his office. I had no idea why. I hadn't done anything I could think of. I was sure it was something about getting ready to go to Cape Girardeau, so I made my way to his office. He told me to pack up my things. They were going to have to take me back to Little Rock to stand trial for hurting those two cops. I thought that had been forgotten and forgiven like everything else in my life. He informed me to be ready to leave within the hour. I left his office and never even stopped at my room. I hit the woods in a run. After running about a hundred yards into the woods, I stopped and sat down in a brush top to gather my thoughts. Why was this happening to me? I was trying harder than anyone else in the program to change and to do what was right. God was in charge of everything. Why was He allowing this?

It was only a moment until a group of men from the program came through the woods looking for me. I sat still in the brush top and watched them pass. Where was I going to go now? What was I going to do? Was I going to trust God or not? Was all I had done for Him in vain? What about all the prayers I had prayed for Him to use me? Why would a God of love put me back through this again? I

just couldn't believe He would. I'll bet He set this trial up to clear my record and set me really free. That's bound to be what He's up to. I made up my mind to trust Him. I climbed out of the brush top and went and turned myself in to the staff.

They loaded me up and off to Little Rock we went. The police met me at the door, handcuffed me and took me away to a cell where they gave me my orange suit to wear. In my heart I was sure I would not be here long. I just knew that God was going to straighten this thing out. The next morning it was off to court. There were eighteen men in one little van handcuffed together. Don't ask me how we all got in there, but we did.

All of us were waiting to see the judge. One at a time, they would take a man in, bring him back and get another. All the men tried to act tough, but when they came back after receiving their sentences which ranged from one to forty years, each man sat quietly on his bunk with his head in his hands thinking of the chunk of his life that just been taken from him. I thought they would never get to me. I was third from the last to be tried. The door opened. It was my turn. The guards met me at the door and walked me down a long hall into the judges chambers. I was not going to get a jury trial! The judge would handle my case.

The prosecuting attorney presented his case and it was air tight. My attorney never even spoke that I can remember. The judge asked me to stand and I'll never forget his words. "Lynn Ray Hobbs, this court finds you guilty of two counts of assaulting an officer. No man

in his right mind, unarmed, would attack two armed policemen and do what you did to them. So I find you criminally insane and sentence you to life in the Maximum Security Rogers Hall of Arkansas."

A warm fear and hatred filled my body. What kind of God was this? What kind of games was he playing with my life? I was in total shock not remembering anything much until I was being escorted down the long gray halls that would be my home, as far as I knew, forever.

This place was filled with mean, devil possessed men. There were about seventy five of us in one holding block. There was nothing to do but smoke and watch TV. I was still trying to live a Christian life even though God had played what I thought was a sick trick on me. Even though I knew deep inside that God was not like that, that was the way it looked. Maybe He made a deal with satan as he did with Job. Who knows?

Slowly my devotion stopped. The only time I prayed was at bed time and over my meals. I kept trying to convince the staff they had made a mistake with me. They told me there was no mistake and I might as well accept the fact that I would be there the rest of my life. I couldn't accept that. Somehow, someway God was going to get me out of there.

I was like a wild animal at times pacing back and forth in the hall for hours at a time. On a nice day they would let us go outside and walk around in the court yard. It was a piece of land about one

hundred and fifty feet square with a fifty foot brick wall around it with six rolls of razor wire on top of that. If a person wasn't crazy when he came here, he would be if he ever left.

I stayed to myself as much as possible, but there were two or three that I witnessed to and we would pray together. One of these men drank his urine all the time. I know he was devil possessed. When we held hands and prayed he would shake so bad he could hardly stand up. I never had the nerve to cast it out. I guess I was afraid it might come into me and I had enough problems already. The only visitor I had while I was there was my daughter and a nephew who came once a month. I really looked forward to seeing them.

Time drug on. I had about convinced myself that I would never get out when one day my counselor quit and a new one came. She was a sweet old lady with gentle ways. She was always encouraging me to pray and believe God. She could have lost her job if they knew, but she was faithful to pray with me all the time.

Then one day out of the blue the staff supervisor came up to me and told me to be ready to go to court the next morning. I couldn't believe it. I had been trying to get a new trial for fourteen months. Now it was tomorrow morning. Later that evening I received a call from my state appointed lawyer. He knew nothing about me and it showed that he really didn't care by the way he talked to me.

The next morning they locked me in that van and off to the court house I went. I knew this would probably be my last shot at ever

getting freed and I didn't see a chance in a million. My time came to go in front of the judge again. Much to my horror, I realized that it was the same one I went in front of before.

The hearing was called to order and the prosecuting attorney presented his case and he was sharp. He didn't miss a thing. I was guilty and he had no trouble proving it while my attorney and I sat speechless. Not an objection did my attorney make while the prosecuting attorney finished his case and made his plea to keep me in the max security institution. As he turned to take his seat, my attorney stood and started toward the bench. The judge looked up and told him to take his seat. Not a sound was heard in that courtroom while the judge looked at me and said. "Lynn Ray Hobbs, I can give you life and should. I don't know why I'm doing this, but I'm going to drop all charges and turn you loose."

You could have knocked me over with a feather. I remember starting to say something to the judge, but he screamed at me to shut up and for them to get me out of there.

Wow! I was a free man. They took me back to Rogers Hall to clear. All the guys were glad to see me go. The next day my nephew picked me up and took me to Mom's. She was eager for me to get back into Teen Challenge. I wouldn't have done it for anyone but her. So after a week at home I was on my way back to the Hot Springs Teen Challenge Center. I kept asking God why he sent me to prison, but I never got an answer until much later. I went through another four months at Hot Springs then went to Cape Girardeau.

I had no more than arrived when I had another attack. I hadn't had any problems for over a year and now it was happening again. Satan was after my mind again. I went through three days where I wouldn't open my eyes. I was afraid I was in hell. I wouldn't work or eat. I just laid in bed with my eyes closed. Then on the third day as I lay in bed a cold rough hand grabbed me by my shirt collar and lifted me up in bed. He told me to either get up and go to work or go back to prison, but I was not going to lay around there. I opened my eyes to see Herb Meppelink, the Cape Girardeau director nose to nose. With all the fights I had been in I knew I'd have a better chance against the devil than against this guy.

I got up and went to work. The oppression left as fast as it came. I had my struggles in that ten months, but nothing I wasn't able to handle with prayer and fasting. Some of the best days of my life were walking in the big valley near the center. God's presence was there so strong.

Mom was writing every week. Her health was growing worse all the time. It was as though she was just hanging on to see me change and change I did. I cut my hair, shaved my beard, didn't cuss anymore and God was all I talked about.

With each month men were graduating and new men were coming in. We held an average of about one hundred and ten. Then before I knew it, it was my time to graduate and I was on my way home. But home had changed. It would never be like it was. Mom had become so ill they had placed her and Dad in a nursing home.

The old house where I was raised stood empty and looked so dead as I stood in front of it thinking back on my past and pondering on my future. I was going to move in with Mom & Dad and take care of them for a change. Things couldn't be at all like I planned. My brother had bought Mom's & Dad's old house and was going to let me live there and work for him. I worked and went to Mom's old church and was learning to live a Christian life in what we called it in prison, the free world.

I hadn't been out long until my cousin's friend asked me to go to the jail and minister with him on Sunday. I went once and he let me speak. Every man in the cell was in tears as I told of what my life was like before Christ came into my life. When the altar call was given, everyone of them came to accept Jesus! I was hooked! Winning souls was fun and easy. In just a short time one of the Arkansas prisons called me to hold a service. This time it was no different, only more men. Over a hundred men came to know the Lord's grace. Every man in that chapel came to the front. Grown men were standing at the altar crying on each other and forgiving each other. That night on the way home I was thanking the Lord for all he had done that night. Then I heard a voice say "That's why."

I replied, "That's why what Lord?"

He said, "That's why you went to prison. Because now you have a heart for them. Before you were in and out of jail. You never knew what it was like for those spending time. Now you care."

After that night, for the next year I was in and out of just about every prison in Arkansas. Doors were opening everywhere, even in other states: Texas, Oklahoma, Illinois and North Carolina. I was going everywhere and working as a weekly volunteer in a local prison on a regular bases.

Then an opportunity of a life time came. I was asked to go to Jamaica and go into their prisons. A volunteer I was working with had asked me to go. He was going to be teaching and wanted me to do a two week concert. Mom was really thrilled to hear this. The next thing I knew I found myself in Jamaica singing country music to a bunch of reggae loving natives, but they accepted me.

We were holding a conference in the Oching Hotel in Kingston day and night. In the day I would sing and give my testimony. At night Neville Grant and Errol Bailey were teaching on the family. I was also visiting prisons and orphanages in the day. I will never forget one night during the conference when Neville Grant was teaching in front of at least six hundred people, he broke the routine when he went to the platform. He was telling them about an American friend of his that was there and wrote his own songs and what God had done for him. I knew he was talking about me and felt he was going to ask me to sing. I was trying to get his attention to let him know that I was not prepared. I had no sound tracks. When he asked everybody to put their hands together and welcome Lynn Hobbs, I reluctantly joined him on the stage. As he greeted me with a hug, he whispered in my ear, "Lynn, one of the most notorious

criminals in Jamaica is here. He has heard about you and came to hear for himself."

Now the pressure was on, so I began to share with a new and different anointing than I had ever experienced before. It was powerful, short and to the point. When I came off the stage a man met me and said someone wanted to talk to me. The Holy Spirit revealed it was the man I had just been told about that I would be talking to and showed him to while I was still some distance away. He was a very large black man, probably 350 LB and about 6'3". He had scars all over him from knife cuts, scars about his neck and bullet wounds in his arms. As his goon introduced me, his only words were, "Tell me more."

Trying to not show any fear I asked if we could go somewhere where it would be quieter. I quickly turned and led the way out of the building. With a boldness I had never used before in winning souls, I began to share my life, my deepest secrets. He stood and listened quietly. Where we had left the building I noticed the one who introduced us and another man left following us in the distance. After sharing my heart, he looked at me and smiled as he said, "Many have tried to persuade me to let Christ in my life before, but you have persuaded me to let Jesus in my life."

I led him in the sinner's prayer. The tears convinced me it was real. I was talking to him later and he told me that those two men were in his gang and were armed and on their way to rob a store when he was told about an American outlaw who had gotten saved

and was there sharing his testimony. They decided to stop for a moment just to see if I was real. He shared with me that he was going to rob the store because he was married with two small children and had no money. I blessed him with \$20 as he was leaving. He was reluctant to take it, but did.

I returned to the conference feeling great about what had happened, then the devil started in on me. This guy wasn't for real. He had just conned me out of \$20. Things like that didn't happen to guys like me. It happened to men like David Wilkerson, Billy Graham and Benny Hinn, but not to a nobody like Lynn Hobbs. So, I prayed that if it was for real God would show me before I left Jamaica.

We had about a week left before returning to the States. The next day we left Kingston and headed to Montego Bay to speak at Christ For The Nations. It was a beautiful place overlooking the bay. Clear blue water as far as the eye could see. What was hillbilly from Arkansas doing in a place like this? Heaven couldn't be much prettier in my eyes. I sure enjoyed my walks along beaches in the early morning. What a way to pray, walking in the white sand in the edge of the water. Just me and Jesus.

That week flew by and before we knew it we were back in Kingston preparing to come home the next morning. My friend, Errol and I took advantage of this time to buy some souvenirs to take home to the States to give to those people who helped with the finances for our trip. We were walking the crowded streets of

Kingston shoulder to shoulder with hundreds of native Jamaicans when all at once I heard off in the distance someone hollering, "Lynn!"

I thought to myself, "That's strange. Some Jamaican has the same name I have."

Again I heard it closer, "Lynn!"

Who could be calling my name? No one knew me there. Again it rang out, "Lynn!"

I turned to look and to my surprise it was Winston Blake, the man I had led to the Lord at the convention. He came running up to me with a friend with him, saying, "This is him. This is the man I was telling you about."

Then he turned to me and said, "Tell my friend about Jesus."

It was real! God had shown me that not only was he saved but he was already witnessing for the Lord. He and I shared Christ with his friend over a burger and Coke. We said our good-byes as I parted to return to Neville Grant's house to finish packing.

The flight home was over before I knew it. I was full of stories to tell. The prisons in Jamaica were worse than a zoo. Some of the men had no or little clothes. They slept on a straw bed and showered under a broken water pipe. Their bathroom was a large hole in one corner of the prison. And I had thought I had it bad. The prisons in the States were like a Hotel Hilton compared to those in Jamaica.

Upon returning home, Mom was excited to hear about all I did while I was gone. Her health was failing fast now and Dad had had a

stroke and could no longer walk or talk. It was only a few months after I returned that Mom went into the hospital for her last time. She had had pneumonia when she was a child and now she could hardly breathe. The scars in her lungs had added more and more problems through the years. The doctor had called us all in. I already knew she was going home. God had spoken to me days before, so when she went into the hospital I was prepared to let the only woman I had really ever loved go. It was still hard. I was binding up and praying against death as I stood in that hospital room watching her fight for every breath. God kept speaking to me to let her go. As I walked from the room I looked toward heaven and said "Okay God, she's yours," as she breathed her last.

I had a hurt in my soul that only God could fix. Nothing but his grace could ever take her place. At least she got to see me change before she left. She always wanted to hear me speak, but was never healthy enough to go. I was glad she never heard my testimony. She knew I was bad on drugs, but she never really knew. She never saw me in the old life, in my drug houses after I had been up for days and days, doing drugs. At times so high that I could not even walk. I would drag myself from room to room on the floor, sometimes doing shots that made my heart almost jump out of my chest. Now she was at peace, not only with her soul but with a knowledge that God had done a miracle for her.

After the funeral I was looking at the last family picture we had made the last Christmas, just two months before. It was her, Dad and

all the kids but me. But Mom had a big smile on her face this time. Not like the pictures of the past that I was missing in where she would have a worried look. The reason I wasn't in this picture was because I was in jail ministering this time winning souls for the Lord. So now when I look at that picture I can see the joy that my changed life brought to her. My only regret was the hurt I caused her all those years, but with her prayers, Teen Challenge and the Holy Ghost I see now that I had no chance. The sad thing was that I fought against the best thing that ever happened to me in my life, "Jesus Christ."

A few years later Dad went to be with Mom and The Lord. I continued to work as a volunteer in the prisons until about a year and a half ago. At this time the chaplain resigned where I was volunteering and to my surprise the warden came and asked me to take his place as Chaplain Volunteer Coordinator of the prison.

I still visit my old friends, the staff at Teen Challenge as often as possible. I'm really thankful for that place and those men.

The Veterans Hospital said I would never work or be able to take care of myself again because of the brain cells I had killed doing drugs. But now I work and run my own remodeling business. I thought I would always be alone, but God has given me a wonderful wife and has restored me to my daughter with two grandchildren. I am active in my local church and living a normal Christian life.

What God has done for me, he can and will do for you. You only need to give him (Christ) an honest chance. It's as simple as saying, "God, forgive me."

AFTERWORD

by Matthew Foutch

Lynn's manuscript ends in 1997. He gave it to me sometime around 2012.

Lynn passed on to be with the Lord Jesus on Tuesday, January 28, 2014, at the age of 67.

Lynn Hobbs was a special man to me and to many other believers in Christ. This is the raw account that Lynn passed on to me for sharing. It is slightly edited for grammar and structure. Names were changed to protect the innocent.

The Lynn that I knew was a man who had been changed by the power of Jesus Christ. I believe that Lynn wanted to share the truth of his past in order to bring glory to God — in that, if Jesus can save a man like me, He surely can save a person like you, and the persons who you are praying for.

The scripture is true:

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

— 2 Corinthians 5:17, KJV

God bless you.

Sincerely,

Matthew Foutch